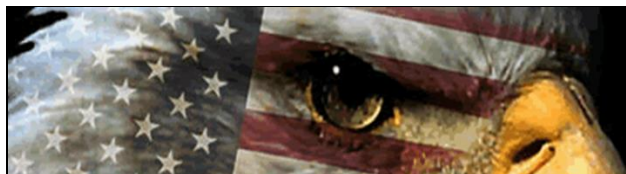



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HEADLINE	08/19 Advantage Russia but still struggling
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/briefing/russia-ukraine-war-donbas.html
GIST	<p>When we last updated you on the war in Ukraine, we laid out three possible scenarios for the near future. This morning, we'll explain how the events of the past six weeks have affected the war, with help from our colleagues who are covering it from Ukraine, Washington and elsewhere.</p> <p>The bottom line is that the most recent phase of the war has gone better for Ukraine than many observers expected after Russia's progress earlier this year. "The Ukrainians are doing well," Helene</p>

Cooper, a Washington correspondent, told us. “The Russians are measuring progress in feet, not even miles, at this point.”

As Anton Troianovski, The Times’s Moscow bureau chief, puts it: “The Russians appeared to have lost some of the momentum they had earlier in the summer. If you look closely, you see the Ukrainians gaining a bit of momentum, even though not that much is changing on the map.”

Victory, stalemate, defeat

As a reminder, here are the three scenarios we described last month, which were based partly on public comments by Avril Haines, the U.S. director of national intelligence:

- **Russia starts to win.** Russia would continue to take over more of eastern Ukraine, [as it did in the spring](#), and ultimately control all of the Donbas region. This progress might break Ukrainians’ will to fight elsewhere — and weaken support for the war in Western Europe and the U.S.
- **The war falls into a stalemate.** Many analysts, including Haines, consider this scenario the most likely. In it, Russia would dominate the east but would not be able to go much farther.
- **Ukraine starts to win.** Ukraine would halt Russia’s advance in the east and also succeed in launching counterattacks, potentially reclaiming some territory in the south, where Russia has also taken over some cities.

Looking back at this list now, we are struck that the recent events seem to fall somewhere between the second and third scenarios.

In the early summer, Russia seemed to be making progress toward taking over all of eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region, which includes two provinces, Donetsk and Luhansk. But that progress appears to have slowed. Russia controls only Luhansk, not all of Donetsk.

“Russia has made little to no inroads in the Donetsk province, and U.S. officials don’t think they’ll take it this year,” said our colleague Eric Schmitt, a senior correspondent covering security issues. Colin Kahl, a top Pentagon official, has pointed out that Russia’s minuscule progress in the east has come at a high cost — about 20,000 troop deaths and another 50,000 or so injuries. Michael Schwartz, a Times correspondent who has been covering the war in Ukraine, calls these numbers “astonishing.”

Seth Jones, a military expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said, “The Russians probably don’t have enough effective combat forces to fully take Donetsk,” at least not anytime soon. ([This recent story](#) by Helene has more details.)

Ukraine has been able to stymie Russia thanks in large part to weapons from the U.S., the E.U. and other allies. Especially important in recent weeks have been truck-mounted rocket launchers, [known as HIMARS](#), whose satellite-guided missiles can travel nearly 50 miles. The U.S. has sent 16 of the launchers to Ukraine so far and helped train their crews.

The HIMARS are one reason that Ukraine has been able to strike more deeply into Russian-held territory than before. One target has been Kherson, a region in southern Ukraine that Russia controls and where Ukraine may be gearing up for a counterattack. Ukraine has also carried out successful sabotage attacks in Crimea, an area of southern Ukraine that Vladimir Putin annexed in 2014.

“To walk right in and start blowing up military bases in Crimea is a real embarrassment for Russia,” Michael said. (Here’s [a profile of the resistance fighters](#) conducting the sabotage operations, written from Ukraine by Andrew Kramer.)

Together, these attacks have forced Russia to divert several thousand troops from the east to defend areas that had previously seemed secure. As Helene said, “The Russians are now fighting a two-front war.”

Putin was hoping to be in a better position by now. After he was defeated in his initial attempt to oust Ukraine's government, his fallback goal became taking over eastern Ukraine. That now seems unlikely to happen this year. "Russia is not even accomplishing its scaled-down goal," Helene added.

A long war

With all this said, Russia still has some major advantages. Putin seems [completely in control](#) of Russia's government, allowing him to play a long game. And Russia has a history of winning wars of attrition, recently in Syria and Chechnya and less recently during World War II — although not in Afghanistan, which demonstrates that Russia can also lose these conflicts.

In the current war, Russian troops may not be making much progress, but neither is Ukraine. It still has not recaptured large amounts of territory in the east or the south. Ukrainian troops and civilians have also suffered heavy casualties, Michael said.

One unexpected recent positive for Putin has been his ability to fight the war without having to resort to a draft. Some analysts had predicted that he would need to mobilize more troops from the Russian population, Anton notes. Instead, Russia has continued to fight using only its existing troops, and forcibly drafted residents of eastern Ukraine.

In coming weeks, Putin will likely try to bolster domestic support by [holding show trials](#) for Ukrainian prisoners of war from the southern city of Mariupol. Over the longer term, he seems to be hoping that European and U.S. support for Ukraine may flag, especially if he can keep energy prices high.

As well as the past few weeks have gone for Ukraine, Putin has overcome setbacks before, through a mixture of patience and brutality.

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HEADLINE	08/18 Cruise bookings up, Covid testing loosens
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/cruise-bookings-spike-as-covid-19-testing-requirements-are-loosened/
GIST	<p>A surge in cruise bookings on the day after Carnival Cruise Line announced that it was relaxing its coronavirus testing requirements proves there's a "pent-up demand" for cruising that has not yet been satisfied, the cruise line declared Tuesday.</p> <p>On Friday, Carnival announced it would no longer require vaccinated passengers to take a coronavirus test within three days of boarding cruises less than 16 days long, except on trips stopping in Canada, Bermuda, Greece and Australia.</p> <p>Carnival owns Seattle-based Holland America Line. As Alaska cruises operated by Holland America and other lines departing from Seattle make a stop in Canada, the vaccine and testing requirements remain in effect for those trips.</p> <p>Unvaccinated passengers will no longer be required to submit to an "exemption request process" and will be allowed to board by simply presenting the results of a negative PCR or antigen test taken within three days of boarding, except on trips to Australia or trips 16 nights or longer. Children younger than 5 are exempt from all testing and vaccination requirements.</p> <p>The new rules take effect on Sept. 6. On Monday, the first full business day after the announcement, bookings for Carnival cruises were twice as high as on the same date in 2019, the company said in a news release.</p> <p>"Mid-August is typically not a busy month for cruise bookings, but it's clear that pent-up demand for Carnival has not been satisfied and guests are responding very favorably to our updated protocols," Carnival Cruise Line President Christine Duffy said in a statement.</p>

Prior to the announcement, bookings through the end of 2022 “have also been very solid,” she said, adding, “With the further alignment of protocols to other vacation choices, our guests are booking the remaining 2022 inventory, and are getting a head start planning for 2023.”

Most other major cruise lines have announced similar moves since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stopped monitoring cruise ships for COVID-19 cases last month.

Beginning Aug. 8, Royal Caribbean dropped its testing requirement for vaccinated passengers sailing less than six nights, but kept the requirement for unvaccinated passengers on all trips.

In an earnings report released on July 28, Royal Caribbean said that booking volumes in the second quarter for 2022 sailings were 30% higher than bookings during the comparable period in 2019.

In addition, “booking volumes for 2023 have shown consistent improvement week over week and have been accelerating over the last several weeks,” the report said.

Norwegian Cruise Lines is dropping all pre-cruise requirements for vaccinated passengers ages 12 and over beginning on Sept. 3. Unvaccinated passengers 12 and over will have to present a negative antigen or PCR test 72 hours before boarding. Children 11 and younger will not be subject to testing or vaccination requirements of any kind, the cruise line said.

On MSC Cruises, testing is no longer required for vaccinated passengers sailing less than six nights from U.S. ports. Unvaccinated passengers 2 years old and up must present proof of a negative result of a test taken within three days of boarding.

Stock prices of publicly traded cruise lines have been up sharply over the past five days, though they remain well below their 52-week highs.

Carnival closed at \$11.19, up 13% over the past five days. Royal Caribbean was up 10.7% over the past five days and closed at \$44.08 on Tuesday. Norwegian’s \$14.56 close on Tuesday was 14.7% higher over the past five days. MSC is privately traded.

The website Cruise Critic, which produces news about the industry as well as lets consumers book cruises from its site, recently surveyed 5,000 readers and found attitudes about post-COVID cruising equally split. The 45% who said they are ready for pre-cruise tests to be over only slightly exceeded the 44% who said they aren’t ready because pre-cruises tests make them feel safer on board, respondents told Cruise Critic.

Aaron Saunders, Cruise Critic’s senior editor, said the site has heard from travelers on both sides of the issue.

“While we’ve certainly heard from some travelers who aren’t yet ready for COVID-related policies to be relaxed, we also hear from a number who are ready to see changes made — specifically around testing requirements,” Saunders said in an email.

Jennifer Walker, owner of Jennifer Walker Travel in Washington, Illinois, said most clients she speaks to “still feel cruises aren’t a safe form of travel given the crowds onboard, and nothing seems to change their impression. They’re in a ‘wait-and-see’ position.”

However, Laurel Brunvoll, of My Unforgettable Trips in Gaithersburg, Maryland, said she has only seen a small increase in cruise bookings over the past several days but figures that’s because few people are aware of the change in protocol.

“The relaxation of testing and vaccine requirements helps streamline the entire planning process and relieves a lot of stress and uncertainty for all cruisers (regardless of their vaccination status) as they anticipate their vacation,” Brunvoll said by email.

	<p>But Hubert Harriman, of Boca Raton, Florida, a veteran of 140 cruises, said the industry can now expect the return of passengers who have avoided booking a cruise because they don't want to bother testing.</p> <p>"We have taken five cruises since COVID and had to go through the hassle of pre-testing each time," he said Tuesday. "I am sure that many people didn't want to bother doing that so it should increase sales."</p>
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HEADLINE	08/19 Germany dependence on China growing
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/german-dependence-china-growing-at-tremendous-pace-research-shows-2022-08-19/
GIST	<p>BERLIN, Aug 19 (Reuters) - The German economy became more dependent on China in the first half of 2022, with direct investment and its trade deficit reaching new heights, despite political pressure on Berlin to pivot away from Beijing, according to research seen by Reuters.</p> <p>At the same time, growth in German exports to China weakened significantly, the German Economic Institute (IW) said in its study, citing economists pointing to a trend towards more local production in the Chinese market.</p> <p>"The German economy is much more dependent on China than the other way round," said Juergen Matthes, who authored the study.</p> <p>He warned that this dependence posed a political problem as Beijing's stance on the Ukraine war and its military posture towards Taiwan placed German business with the world's second-largest economy under scrutiny.</p> <p>"Yet despite these dangers and problems, economic interdependencies with China have been moving in the wrong direction at a tremendous pace in the first half of 2022," the economist said.</p> <p>The study found that German investment in China amounted to around 10 billion euros (\$10 billion) between January and June, far exceeding the previous peak half-year value recorded since the turn of the millennium of 6.2 billion euros.</p> <p>"The Chinese sales market and the profits beckoning there in the short term simply seem too attractive," Matthes said.</p> <p>China's share of German imports rose to 12.4% in the first half of 2022, compared with 3.4% in 2000, while German imports of Chinese goods surged in value terms by 45.7% year on year during that six-month period, the IW found.</p> <p>Germany's trade deficit with the country had leapt to almost 41 billion euros by mid-2022, the institute said, adding that the gap was set to widen further.</p> <p>The IW called for a policy turnaround, urging a reduction in incentives for doing business with China and a shift towards more trade with other emerging markets, particularly in Asia.</p> <p>Matthes also called on German businesses to curb their dependency on China, warning that any Western sanctions against Beijing, for example if it invaded Taiwan, would threaten particularly exposed companies with bankruptcy.</p> <p>"We otherwise risk running into a 'too big too fail' situation like we saw with the banks," he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Yangtze shrinks, drought disrupts industry
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/china-droughts-economy-chongqing-13e7b32da8113aea92e4f69b4aaf62cd

GIST

CHONGQING, China (AP) — Ships crept down the middle of the Yangtze on Friday after China's driest summer in six decades left one of the mightiest rivers barely half its normal width and set off a scramble to contain the damage to a weak economy in a politically sensitive year.

Factories in Sichuan province and the adjacent metropolis of Chongqing in the southwest were ordered to shut down after reservoirs that supply hydropower fell to half their normal levels and demand for air conditioning surged in scorching temperatures.

River ferries in Chongqing that usually are packed with sightseers were empty and tied to piers beside mudflats that stretched as much as 50 meters (50 yards) from the normal shoreline to the depleted river's edge. Smaller ships sailed down the middle of the Yangtze, one of China's biggest trade channels, but no large cargo ships could be seen.

Normally bustling streets were empty after temperatures hit 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit) in Chongqing on Thursday. State media said that was the hottest in China outside the desert region of Xinjiang in the northwest since official records began in 1961.

"We cannot live through this summer without air conditioning," said Chen Haofeng, 22, who was taking pictures of the exposed riverbed. "Nothing can cool us down."

The disruption adds to challenges for the ruling Communist Party, which is trying to shore up sagging economic growth before a meeting in October or November when President Xi Jinping is expected to try to award himself a third five-year term as leader.

The world's second-largest economy grew by just 2.5% over a year earlier in the first half of 2022, less than half the official target of 5.5%.

The drought's impact in Sichuan is unusually severe because the province gets 80% of its power from hydroelectric dams.

Thousands of factories that make processor chips, solar panels and auto components in Sichuan and Chongqing shut down this week for at least six days.

Some announced there was no disruption in supplies to customers, but the Shanghai city government said in a letter released Thursday that Tesla Ltd. and a major Chinese automaker were forced to suspend production.

The city government of Chengdu, the Sichuan provincial capital, told households to conserve power by setting air conditioning no lower than 27 C (80 F). Another city, Dazhou, earlier announced rolling three-hour daily power outages for neighborhoods.

The Yangtze basin, covering parts of 19 provinces, produces 45% of China's economic output, according to the World Bank.

Low water levels in rivers also forced halts to cargo shipments.

A canal that connects Wuhan on the Yangtze with the city of Anqing to the northeast in Anhui was closed because it was too shallow for vessels to move safely, the Shanghai news outlet The Paper reported.

The national impact of shutdowns is limited because Sichuan accounts for only 4% of industrial production, while other provinces use more coal-fired power, which hasn't been disrupted.

The government says China's two main state-owned power companies, State Grid Ltd. and Southern Grid Ltd., are moving power from 15 other provinces to Sichuan.

	<p>A member of the Communist Party's seven-member ruling Standing Committee, Han Zheng, promised official support to ensure power supplies during a visit Wednesday to State Grid, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.</p> <p>China suffered similar disruptions last year when a dry summer caused hydropower shortages and shut down factories in Guangdong province in the southeast, a global manufacturing center. Other regions suffered blackouts due to coal shortages and mandatory power cuts to meet official energy efficiency targets.</p> <p>This year is unlikely to be so severe, according to Larry Hu of Macquarie Group.</p> <p>"If the power rationing in Sichuan only lasts a few weeks, the impact on the industrial production at the national level should be very limited," Hu said in a report.</p> <p>Xuguang Electronics Co. in Chengdu said the six-day shutdown would reduce its output by 48,000 electronic circuits. The company said it expected to take a 5 million yuan (\$600,000) hit to its annual profit.</p> <p>BOE Technology Group Co., which makes electronic displays, said a Sichuan subsidiary would suspend production. BOE promised in a statement issued through the Shenzhen Stock Exchange to "fully guarantee delivery of customers' products."</p> <p>News reports said producers in Sichuan of solar panels and lithium for electric cars also shut down, but no companies announced disruptions in supplies.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/17 Return-to-office deadline showdown looms
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/return-to-office-deadline-after-labor-day-sets-up-showdowns/ar-AA10Mkd0
GIST	<p>A return-to-office showdown is coming in September.</p> <p>Companies such as Apple and Peloton have told corporate and office-based workers in the US to come back next month, and whether they do will say a lot about the ever-shifting balance of power between bosses and their underlings.</p> <p>If the latest calls for "RTO" sound familiar, they are: Last summer, many companies targeted Labor Day in the US and Canada as the inflection point for remote workers to return to their cubicles. The Delta variant of COVID-19 upended those plans, prompting leaders to look to early 2022, but the Omicron variant soon scuttled that. Apple has pushed back its RTO nearly half a dozen times in the past year.</p> <p>Across companies, the delays confused and annoyed workers, making some firms unwilling to deliver specific mandates, instead trying to lure staffers back with perks.</p> <p>Those days might be over soon. As the US economy and stock market deliver mixed signals about the outlook for growth, business leaders have decided to draw a line in the sand. Beyond Apple and Peloton, Royal Bank of Canada and Comcast have also told workers to return several days a week sometime after Labor Day, which falls on Sept. 5. Corporate chiefs like Jamie Dimon at JPMorgan Chase continue to bash remote work, raising concerns among some workers that staying home might be hazardous to their careers.</p> <p>But demand for labor remains rock solid, providing skilled workers a good bit of leverage. Average office occupancy across 10 of America's largest cities has barely budged in the past five months. In the battle of the boardroom versus the bedroom, something has to give come September.</p> <p>"We believe post Labor Day will be a meaningful milestone" said Jay Jiang, finance chief at Dream Office, a Canadian real estate investment trust, which owns office buildings and parking garages in</p>

Toronto and other cities. “We’ll start to see a lot more traction after Labor Day and getting people back into the office.”

A milestone for senior executives could be a millstone for the rank and file. After more than two years of flexible work arrangements, many white-collar workers have grown accustomed to being able to work where and when they wish, freeing them up to care for kids, aging parents, or to simply escape endless Zoom calls and take a stroll in the backyard after lunch. According to the Future Forum, a research consortium backed by Salesforce-owned Slack Technologies Inc. that polls more than 10,000 so-called knowledge workers every quarter globally, most workers want that flexibility, and might leave if they don’t get it.

Most companies calling for September RTOs aren’t demanding workers get back to the office every day — by now, they know that’s a non-starter. Just one in five workers wants to be in the office all week, Future Forum found in its most recent poll conducted in May. Workers who are in cubicles Monday through Friday say they’re much less satisfied with their jobs compared with peers with more flexible arrangements, the survey found.

“People want the flexibility to go in or work from home, but when there’s a mismatch there, burnout goes up,” said Jim Harter, the chief scientist of workplace and wellbeing at pollster Gallup. “Getting that match right, between what the employer and the worker wants, is essential.”

To do so, companies are adopting hybrid schedules, even at Dimon’s firm JPMorgan, where about 40 percent of the workforce is in one day and home the next. Many hybrid plans call for workers to be in Tuesday through Thursday, which is what Peloton has planned. Another approach, laid out by Apple, also calls for three days in the office but lets individual teams select one or more of those days, an option that workplace consultants favor as it allows for some autonomy and recognizes that engineers, marketers, and salespeople don’t all work in the same patterns.

Just under half of US knowledge workers have some type of hybrid schedule, Future Forum has found.

Getting that hybrid formula right is tricky, and the September mandates suggest that leaders would rather tilt the scales on the side of in-person work, which they claim improves collaboration, coaching, and mentoring. Policies that were once merely recommended will soon be enforced, with companies tracking who’s badging in and who’s not.

“For hybrid to continue to work effectively, we need to get the balance right and be a bit more deliberate about when and how we organize on site,” Royal Bank of Canada Chief Executive Officer Dave McKay said in a memo to employees Tuesday. “That’s why, as we move into the fall, I’m asking our leaders and colleagues to come together more often in person to work and collaborate.”

For some, that’s a big ask. Among those dissatisfied with the amount of flexibility their job affords, 70 percent said they’d look for a new opportunity, according to Future Forum. Corporate chiefs seem fine with that, especially those at companies such as Peloton that have had to rein in costs as their once-meteoric growth rates stalled. For some firms, it could amount to a stealth layoff.

“For those of you who don’t want to return to the office, we respect your choice,” Peloton CEO Barry McCarthy said in an Aug. 12 memo. “We hope you choose to stay, but we understand not everyone will.”

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HEADLINE	08/19 Russia intel failures ahead of invasion
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/08/19/intelligence-war-fsb-ukraine/
GIST	A months-long examination by The Washington Post of the intelligence war in Ukraine draws on a trove of sensitive materials including intercepted communications involving Russian intelligence operatives, as well as in-depth interviews with senior Ukrainian, U.S. and European officials. Here are some key findings:

1. A clandestine branch of Russia's security service was deeply involved in the Kremlin's failed war plan, assuring officials in Moscow that Ukraine's government would fall quickly and deploying operatives to install a puppet regime.

The FSB branch, known internally as the Department of Operational Information, has for years carried out clandestine operations to penetrate Ukraine's institutions, pay off pro-Russian politicians and prevent the country from leaving Moscow's orbit. Despite its intense focus on Ukraine, Western intelligence officials said, the FSB either failed to grasp how fiercely Ukraine would resist, or did understand but couldn't convey such inconvenient information to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

2. FSB officers were so confident they would seize the levers of power in Kyiv that they spent the final days before the war arranging accommodations in the capital.

Communications intercepted by Ukrainian security services show FSB officers asking colleagues for details about apartments and other locations they might use as safe houses, residences or bases of operation. Days before Russian forces crossed into Ukraine, officials said, FSB informants were told to vacate the capital but leave behind keys to their residences for arriving Russian operatives.

3. The FSB's Ukraine department underwent a major expansion in the period leading up to the invasion, according to Ukrainian and Western security officials.

The department surged in size from about 30 officers in 2019 to as many as 160 on the eve of the Ukraine invasion, officials said. FSB teams were assigned regions of Ukraine and networks of sleeper agents inside the country. In retrospect, Ukrainian officials see the buildup as an early warning that Russia was laying the groundwork for an attack.

4. The FSB worked closely with prominent collaborators and lined up at least two pro-Russian governments-in-waiting.

The FSB's main allies included former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich, who fled to Russia in 2014, and Viktor Medvedchuk, an oligarch who became co-leader of Ukraine's main pro-Russian party after forging a close relationship with Putin. Yanukovich was at the center of a group that assembled in Belarus in early March, possibly positioned to swoop in and reclaim power. A second group involving former members of Yanukovich's party gathered in territory in southern Ukraine that was seized early in the war by Russian forces.

5. Despite repeated failures, FSB leaders remain in their positions and the agency has regrouped, putting officers on three-month rotations in regions occupied by Russian forces.

U.S. and other officials said they have seen no evidence that Putin has cleaned house at the top of Russia's spy agencies or held senior officials to account for costly misjudgments. Instead, FSB Director Alexander Bortnikov and the leader of its Ukraine directorate, Sergey Beseda, remain in their positions, overseeing aspects of the war effort.

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HEADLINE	08/18 Powerful storm, severe winds strike Europe
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/18/thunderstorm-winds-derecho-europe/
GIST	<p>A massive storm complex has traveled a nearly 1,000-mile path across Europe, reportedly killing numerous people and causing devastation on the French island of Corsica and to landmarks in Venice, before moving on to inflict major wind damage in parts of Austria and Slovakia.</p> <p>According to the Associated Press, at least five people in France and two in Italy were killed by the wicked storm complex. Some experts believe the storm complex may qualify as a derecho, a particularly</p>

damaging, widespread and long-lived wind storm. Two children reportedly were killed by the same long-tracked storm complex in Austria.

The storm complex was moving exceptionally fast, enhancing its wind risk. The intense line of storms hit the Corsican capital of Ajaccio on the southwest coast at 8:15 a.m. local time on Thursday, then reached Cap Corse on the northeast tip around 9:15 a.m., according to [Meteociel](#). That is a forward speed of roughly 70 mph.

Preliminary reports of wind gusts in Corsica include: 140 mph (225 km/h) in Marignana, 128 mph (206 km/h) in L'Île-Rousse, 122 mph (197 km/h) at Calvi, and 116 mph (188 km/h) in Bocognano, [among others](#).

Dramatic video from Corsica's Ajaccio Napoleon Bonaparte Airport shows the extreme destruction that 136-mph wind gusts, equivalent to the force of a Category 4 hurricane, can cause. The winds [damaged](#) an Airbus A319, a commercial jet that can hold up to 156 passengers, with one of its wingtips bent over by the storm, according to reporting from Airlive.

At least five people were killed in and around the French island during the storm, according to the AP: a 13-year-old girl and a 46-year-old man were killed at two campsites; a 72-year-old woman died when a roof collapsed onto her vehicle; and two people died at sea — a kayaker and a 62-year-old fisherman, whose bodies washed ashore after the storm.

Several others were injured, and at least a dozen people were hospitalized in Corsica, according to the report. The high winds also left 45,000 people without power.

Further on the system's path, two people were reported killed in the Italian province of Tuscany when trees were ripped out of the ground, while several others were injured by falling trees at a campground. In Venice, the rowdy winds tossed tables and chairs like toys in the popular St. Mark's Square, and [pieces of brick](#) were ripped straight off St. Mark's bell tower, the tallest structure in the city.

In Piombino, Italy, a dramatic video of the storm shows a Ferris wheel spinning rapidly in the storm, with the wheel's carriages jostling out of control as the howling winds took over the wheel's operations. According to the AP, hailstones the size of walnuts caused substantial damage in the Liguria region of Italy, busting windows and damaging farmlands that had already been scorched by drought.

The storm continued to bring intense lightning and strong winds even after ripping through parts of Northern Italy. A video from Kranj, Slovenia, shows intense winds ripping off the roof of what appears to be a large apartment complex, damaging cars parked below.

In Austria, [another astonishing video](#) shows high-voltage power masts bent in half. According to [reporting](#) from Austrian broadcaster ORF, at least 65,000 people in Styria, a province in the heart of Austria, lost power during the storm, which brought wind gusts of at least 139 km/h (86 mph).

Elsewhere in Austria, at least two children were killed in the Carinthia region after strong winds toppled trees near a busy lake.

Analysis

The storm's peak winds were seemingly on par with some of the highest ever recorded outside the mountains in Europe. Such strong wind gusts in widespread fashion are [uncommon during summer](#) in the region. A majority of the [widespread wind damage events](#) occur in the fall through spring, typically coming from strong mid-latitude storm systems dancing along the jet stream.

Corsica is seen in the crosshairs of a strong disturbance in the jet stream as the intense storm complex passed.

	<p>Some speculate that the storm may meet the requirements of a derecho — a widespread and long-lived windstorm at least 60 miles wide that leaves 400 miles of damage. Even then, a complex of storms must have wind gusts of at least 58 mph across most of its length, with several gusts of at least 75 mph, according to the U.S. National Weather Service.</p> <p>About one major derecho forms over Europe annually, or several on a small scale. Per research by European Severe Storms Laboratory (ESSL) scientists, most of these convective wind storms have a much smaller and less intense footprint than the swath that occurred Thursday. The location and directional movement also appear to be somewhat uncommon.</p> <p>It is reminiscent of a derecho that struck Germany, including Berlin, in July 2002. That storm complex was responsible for eight deaths and 50 injuries.</p> <p>Authors of a study on that derecho found that “severe convection can attain a size and intensity comparable to that in the United States.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Family mined Pentagon’s data for profit
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/pentagon-data-profit-freedom-information-of-information-act/
GIST	<p>MOST DRIVERS WHO head up to Alta Ski Area from Salt Lake City pay no mind to the nondescript turnoff from Utah State Route 210 that veers out to the left about five miles before the slopes. Some motorists may catch a glimpse of the black gate and the “No Trespassing” signs or see a plain white cargo van peeling off the main road and feel a twinge of curiosity. What passing motorists wouldn’t see, at the end of a winding lane, is a bunker-like concrete structure about the size of a two-story house, surrounded by a system of motion sensors and hidden cameras. Behind the structure’s loading door, a tunnel stretches some 200 feet into the solid granite mountain, leading to a series of vaults that constitute one of the most secure private storage facilities in the world.</p> <p>Designed to protect against floods, earthquakes, fires, and even a nearby nuclear blast, Perpetual Storage opened in 1968 to house some of the most precious objects in America. But by the late 1970s, physical assets were already slightly passé. While Perpetual was happy to secure rare artifacts, what kept paying the salaries of its armed guards was the business of storing corporate microfilm and computer records. Patrick Lynch, Perpetual’s co-owner, told The Washington Post in 1979 that the master file for one customer was worth \$15 million (equivalent to \$60 million today).</p> <p>So when George MacArthur Posey III approached Perpetual in 1978, he wasn’t interested in the vault’s fine art or bullion. He was after information. Posey was looking for certain records belonging to General Electric, and he wasn’t furtive about his intentions. At the time, GE was developing an advanced turbofan engine that would power the US Air Force’s brand-new F-16 fighter plane. As if he were talking to a librarian, Posey asked Lynch for access to the Perpetual vault in order to photograph GE’s records. As Lynch recalled the interaction, Posey explained that he had photographed records concerning the F-16 in the past and had “sold those records to other countries.”</p> <p>Perpetual’s clients spell out very clearly “who can do what with their records,” Lynch told WIRED in a recent phone interview. And GE’s authorization forms made no mention of Posey. After turning Posey down flatly, Lynch reported the interloper to the FBI—something Perpetual hasn’t done since. The FBI’s Los Angeles office noted that Posey tried something similar the next summer, attempting (unsuccessfully) to obtain information about the US Navy’s supersonic F-5 fighter from an engineer at its manufacturer, Northrop.</p> <p>Posey, however, considered himself not only an entrepreneur but a patriot. His small family business, Newport Aeronautical Sales, based in Southern California and previously owned and operated by Posey’s stepfather, sold unclassified technical information to companies that wanted to bid on Pentagon contracts to repair military aircraft or manufacture spare parts. Those would-be contractors were all too happy to</p>

outsource the tedious work of obtaining technical manuals, parts lists, and specs. By helping them, as Posey saw it, he was also helping the US military find the lowest bidder for its contracts.

As it turned out, there was an easier way to obtain valuable technical data than going through the executives of storage vaults, and Posey would make a hugely profitable business of it for the next several decades. It involved a high-minded, fast-evolving, and relatively new law called the Freedom of Information Act, and it would bring the Posey family business millions of dollars in easy money. But it would also turn them into key combatants in the US government's long, concerted battle to keep information from the public. Along the way, Posey would become embroiled in global politics, earn a spell in prison, and watch his own son appear in federal court on charges of conspiracy and theft of government property for actions related to the operations of Newport Aeronautical.

WHAT TURNED INTO a business opportunity for the Poseys began as a Cold War-era fight for government transparency. In 1947, President Harry Truman signed an executive order that gave the executive branch power to investigate and fire any federal employee who was deemed to be disloyal to the country, without having to supply evidence. The results of those investigations were held in secret FBI files. In the mid-1950s, the US government, and the Pentagon, in particular, hoarded information as compulsively as atom bombs. In the midst of the Red Scare, the design of a bow and arrow was deemed too sensitive for public release. The amount of peanut butter American soldiers consumed annually was a military secret. Shark attacks on sailors could neither be confirmed nor denied.

In 1953, John Moss, a newly elected US congressman from Sacramento, California, was appointed to the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee—normally an obscure position without much political power. During Moss' first term, he was appalled to discover that not even he, a member of the committee with statutory jurisdiction over the Post Office, could get information about 2,800 postal workers who had been fired for alleged security reasons.

After Truman left office, the Pentagon became even more secretive; in 1955, President Dwight Eisenhower's defense secretary, Charles Wilson, ordered that for any information to be released to the public, it had to make a "constructive contribution" to national security. Journalists and newspaper editors, who had raised mounting alarms against government secrecy for years, went into an uproar. They found common cause with Moss, a Democrat, who would soon be appointed to the more powerful Government Operations Committee, on which he spearheaded the creation of a Special Subcommittee on Government Information. From his platform as chair of that new subcommittee, Moss began pressing for the bill that would ultimately become the Freedom of Information Act.

"Our system of government is based on the participation of the governed, and as our population grows in numbers it is essential that it also grow in knowledge and understanding," Moss told the House. "We must remove every barrier to information about—and understanding of—government activities consistent with our security if the American public is to be adequately equipped to fulfill the ever more demanding role of responsible citizenship." Moss' Republican cosponsor was a young congressman from Illinois named Donald Rumsfeld.

For a decade, the federal government had fought them every inch of the way. It was only in 1966 that press and public pressure sent the Freedom of Information bill to the desk of President Lyndon Johnson (with unlikely support from the commie-hunting senator Joseph McCarthy). The law went into effect on July 4, 1967. For the first time, members of the American public had the right to inspect information held by their government, with relatively few exceptions, and to sue if their requests for information were unduly denied.

In 1974, in the wake of the Watergate scandal, Congress passed amendments to the Freedom of Information Act that gave the law even more teeth. Congressional hearings had revealed that many bureaucrats were going to great lengths to resist complying with FOIA, much as the White House had tried to stymie Watergate investigators. Now, Congress decreed, any agency that declined to fulfill a FOIA request would be on the hook to pay all legal costs if the requester sued and prevailed, any agency

employee who wrongfully withheld information could be personally sanctioned, and courts would be able to review whether information had been frivolously classified as secret.

Those amendments ushered in a golden age for use of the Freedom of Information Act. For years, backlogs were light; requesters could ask for pretty much anything that wasn't classified and agencies had to hand it over for just the cost of duplication, no more than a few dollars, in a timely manner.

Under those conditions, many of the democratic effects that Moss envisioned began to flourish. Over the years, FOIA has allowed generations of journalists to break tens of thousands of stories and has empowered activists and communities to track everything from government-sanctioned pollution to disaster mismanagement. But the law also opened pathways for the expression of another core American aspiration: free-market economics.

In the late 1970s, George Posey must have realized that filing paperwork with bureaucrats was a lot easier, and less costly, than trying to talk his way into underground bunkers. Newport Aeronautical Sales epitomizes what Ohio State University law professor Margaret Kwoka calls "information resellers"—companies that submit a stream of Freedom of Information Act requests to US government agencies, then treat the responses as merchandise to unload. Cheap FOIA requests in, valuable data out. Some resellers focus on the Security and Exchange Commission's financial filings, others on facility inspection reports from the Food and Drug Administration. The Poseys specialized in engineering drawings, technical orders, and manuals for aircraft, most of them from the military.

Today, these information resellers have become some of the prime beneficiaries of FOIA. In a 2017 analysis of 229,000 FOIA requests, those from journalists accounted for just 8 percent. In 2020, there were nearly 800,000 requests made. At some federal agencies, the vast majority of requests are now from commercial operators who resell or use data for profit. Their turf is where a lot of the battle over the erosion of the freedom of information in America has been fought.

AFTER SEVERAL REQUESTS for comment, George Posey responded to a detailed list of questions, saying in an email that the "majority" of the claims inherent in the questions "are false and misleading." Given the opportunity to specify which claims he was refuting, Posey did not respond before press time. No other employees of Newport Aeronautical or members of the Posey family would speak with WIRED. But court records, investigative reports, and interviews with associates of the Posey family and former employees paint a relatively thorough picture of their family business.

Over time, Newport Aeronautical accumulated stacks of manuals and drawings for most of the US military's active aircraft, from attack helicopters and lumbering transport planes to advanced-strike jets. As the documents piled up, Posey installed floor-to-ceiling shelves in a warehouse attached to Newport Aeronautical's office, paying people to help file and index the growing collection. The folks at Newport Aeronautical had gained a reputation as masters of obtaining aircraft data—"gurus in the industry for any needed manuals," one customer is reported to have said.

To understand why there's a market for military technical documents, it helps to know that the Pentagon operates many of its aircraft for much longer than any commercial airline would, often by decades. When components on those aircraft eventually start to fail, the options for fixing them can be few, far-between, and pricey. "It's called vendor lock, where we have to go back to the original equipment manufacturer," says retired Air Force general Hawk Carlisle, the former president and CEO of the National Defense Industrial Association, a trade organization of companies that support the US military.

In an effort to eliminate vendor lock and reduce costs, the Pentagon prefers to own the technical data for its equipment, then shop around for the cheapest supplier, says Carlisle. But that is not always possible, especially for the many aircraft that have civilian counterparts. Either way, there is now a multibillion-dollar cottage industry of companies that want to bid for government maintenance, repair, and overhaul contracts—but that need the latest blueprints and manuals to do so. Filling that need was Newport Aeronautical's niche.

An aviation and nautical buff, Posey would often turn up at Newport Aeronautical's small office straight from his yacht club in shorts, flip-flops, and Vuarnet sunglasses, recalls a former employee named Al Barazin, who started work there in the early 1990s. Another former employee told WIRED that the CEO still worked hard. Every day, Barazin would arrive at the office to find dozens of requests for technical data spitting out of the fax machine. Each order—say, for the manuals associated with a helicopter's fuel pump—would have a part number. If Newport Aeronautical had the documents, Barazin would photocopy and overnight them to the customers. If not, someone would fill out a preprinted FOIA request form with the part number and contact details and fax or mail it to the relevant military base.

When the request was granted, Newport Aeronautical would mail the government a check for the cost of duplicating the requested documents, maybe \$5 or \$10. Posey would then charge his customers many times that—often \$200 or more. Customers were happy to pay the markup, says Barazin, because “we had this stuff at our fingertips, whereas it would take a repair facility a month or two months to get the data, and they wouldn't be able to quote for the work. That's the model, and it's a brilliant model.”

Some of those customers weren't simply mom-and-pop repair facilities trying to earn US government contracts. About half of Newport's business involved legally selling data abroad, Posey claimed in the 1980s. Merex, a US company owned by Pakistani arms dealer Arif Durrani, did business with foreign countries that needed to maintain their US-made aircraft. Reached by WhatsApp in Pakistan, Durrani remembers visiting Newport Aeronautical's old office in Costa Mesa, crammed with paperwork and photocopiers. “He sold stuff to us whenever we needed it in a hurry,” says Durrani. “For example, the Israeli government would buy components from me directly. When they would order them, I knew that these parts were being transferred to Iran, because Iran was flying Phantom jets in the '80s. Israel was sending its technicians and basically repairing their aircraft.” Durrani says that while Posey did not necessarily know the identity of his customers' end users, he suspected that Posey knew “enough the motive behind what he gets.”

IN THE EARLY 1980s, Posey whisked his new bride, Roberta, off to Kenya for their honeymoon. It was there, his mother Nadja later told the Los Angeles Times, that Posey was approached by representatives of South Africa's government looking to buy some manuals. On his return from Kenya, Posey began popping up on electronic intercepts set up by the FBI in its hunt for spies.

The Pentagon had come to suspect that America's enemies, and the Soviets, in particular, were using FOIA to get their hands on technical data that, although unclassified, still posed a risk to national security. A 1985 Department of Justice memo stated that “Soviet acquisition of US technology significantly shortens their research and development cycle, and reduces the risks associated with the design of new weapons and defensive systems.” But when military bases began withholding such data from their responses, Posey didn't simply fold: He sued the Navy for violating the Freedom of Information Act. In 1984, the case was settled. The Pentagon would now release critical information to data brokers like Newport Aeronautical, provided they limited resale to other qualified contractors. Posey claimed the settlement as a victory, but Newport Aeronautical was now firmly in the government's crosshairs.

By 1986, international horror at South Africa's system of institutionalized racial oppression led the US Congress to pass the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, laying out broad sanctions against the regime. Posey was labeled a South African agent, and the government placed taps on his phones and put a voice-activated bug in the Newport Aeronautical office.

Almost immediately, the veteran FBI agent in charge of that investigation, Robert Ibbotson, tuned in to cloak-and-dagger phone calls that could not be more different from Posey's direct approach at Perpetual Storage.

On April 28, 1986, Posey dialed a number in Pretoria, South Africa, identified himself as “Mr. Brown,” and said he had a package for Johann Van Vuuring, who he identified on a subsequent call as a buyer for the South African Air Force. A few days later, Posey received a call from the office of Nicolaas Vorster, a naval attaché at the South African embassy in Washington, DC, alerting him to a letter on its way.

Van Vuuring called back in August and read Posey a series of 17 groups of letters and numbers: 58L4, 38R11, 275R12, 81L6, 325L1, 348L11, and so on. The FBI identified Van Vuuring's cipher as a dictionary code. The sender encodes their message by finding the word they want in a dictionary, noting the page number, whether it is in the left or right column, and which entry it is from the top. In this case, 58L4 signifies the fourth word down on the left-hand side of page 58: "big."

What makes dictionary codes effective, and difficult to crack, is that they require the sender and recipient to have the same dictionary. "The security lies in the fact that there are so many dictionaries that are published that you have to virtually search through hundreds of them, coming up with the right one, the right volume, and the right copyright date," FBI cryptanalyst Jacquelyn Taschner said.

But a cipher is only as strong as its weakest link. After taking down the code from Van Vuuring, Posey needed help deciphering it. He called his wife—she was being treated at a local hospital at the time—and asked her if she knew the location of "the number books" that they "used to play with." Ibbotson was still listening in. Roberta told Posey that the books were in the bottom-right side of the gray wall unit in the house. Ibbotson had learned the key to understanding Posey's conversations with Van Vuuring—but it would take some time before he would get his hands on that dictionary.

Deciphered later, Van Vuuring's message read: "Big guy visit LA, August, mid month, want meeting for business, and K list farm no good." A subsequent phone call from Van Vuuring allowed the FBI to identify the "big guy" as Joe Botha, an executive with a sales firm about which details are scant. Reports by the FBI suggest that the "K List" was the list of documents Botha was seeking.

That September, Posey arranged to meet Botha for lunch at the historic La Valencia hotel in La Jolla, California. Ibbotson and a contingent of FBI agents staked out the hotel in advance of the meeting and were in place with video and tape recorders. They watched as Posey pulled up, left his car at the valet, and walked straight over to one of the FBI agents. Posey asked the agent if he was Botha, and the agent replied that he wasn't. Posey eventually located Botha without the FBI's assistance.

While the two sat for lunch, Botha delivered Posey a shopping list of technical data and manuals for Newport Aeronautical to procure. The South African would ultimately order documents related to a range of components, including power units for the C-130 transport aircraft and, an old favorite, General Electric jet engines. Some of the items were on the US Munitions List—technology, weapons, and information whose export is strictly controlled, especially to a pariah nation like South Africa.

Posey later insisted on dealing with the South African military through intermediate companies. "I can't deal with anybody on a surface level. I have to stay subsurface so I am protected from scrutiny," he told Botha. When Botha asked what he meant by "protected from scrutiny," Posey replied, "You know, protected from scrutiny of the FBI."

It was far too late for that. The FBI had heard and watched it all.

Ibbotson was listening when Posey told Roberta that the deal stood to make Newport Aeronautical \$98,000 (equivalent to about \$260,000 today), and he was listening when Posey roped in Edward James Bush, an English-born aerospace consultant, to act as a courier for the manuals and then launder the proceeds through his Canadian bank account. The two had already worked together, Bush said later. The year before, Posey had supplied him with technical manuals for F-4 and F-5 fighters, destined for Iran's air force.

In early February 1987, a team of FBI agents followed Posey and Bush as they scrambled to print and pack the South African documents. Bush planned to travel to South Africa through Argentina, where Posey wanted him to drop off some other technical manuals on space and missile systems for the Argentine Air Force.

As the men organized and packed the documents in Newport Aeronautical's office, the FBI listened in on the office bug. "This is not just some routine job. You are violating the export laws," Bush said, according to Ibbotson. "Fucking A," Posey replied, and he and Bush carried on with their plan.

On the afternoon of February 7, Bush checked three white boxes and a blue suitcase for his journey and entered the boarding area at Los Angeles International Airport. There he was arrested by the FBI and US Customs Service agents. Around the same time, in Costa Mesa, the FBI raided the Newport Aeronautical office and Posey's house. As Posey, Roberta, and their 2-year-old son returned home, they found unmarked FBI vehicles and more than a dozen agents crawling through their belongings—including the dictionary codebook that Posey used to communicate with Van Vuuring.

Posey's brother Robert, who was also a Newport Aeronautical employee, gamely fielded questions from reporters. "It's not like we're really trying to hide anything," he told the Los Angeles Times. "If we were shipping guns or missiles, that would be one thing, but these are books!"

In March, according to the Los Angeles Times, Posey became the first person to be indicted under the Anti-Apartheid Act. He was also charged, as was Bush, with conspiring to violate the Arms Export Control Act. Vorster, the South African naval attaché, was mentioned (but not charged) in the indictment and reportedly left the country in a hurry. Reached in retirement in South Africa via email, Vorster told WIRED: "I had no personal contact with these gentlemen, and I certainly never met them." Bush quickly pleaded guilty to violating the Arms Export Control Act and cooperated with the FBI. Posey, however, wanted his day in court.

At the opening of Posey's trial, in July 1987, his lawyer claimed that the military "has had a vendetta with my client going back to the '70s." The prosecutor, assistant US attorney Brian Hennigan, said Posey's own conversations showed that he knew he needed government permission to export the manuals. Hennigan, now a defense attorney in private practice, told WIRED that Posey's trial has stuck with him over the years. Hennigan remembered feeling "a sense of moral fervor" during the prosecution. Posey "wasn't simply trading information, this was trading in information with no thought or no value being placed on what was going to be done with it," he said.

During the trial, Posey said that he and Van Vuuring used codes only because Posey was planning to give him a (possibly illegal) kickback, and he argued that the documents he sold were unclassified and in the public domain. Posey was swiftly convicted of violating the Arms Export Control Act and the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act. When he was sentenced, Posey said: "I did not mean in any way, shape, or form to jeopardize national security, nor did I have the means to do so. A lot of things were said about me which made me out to be some sort of subversive against our country, which is contrary to my character or my true beliefs. I'm a patriot. I've served my country." Patriot or not, Posey was fined \$15,000 and sentenced to 10 years in prison, with all but four months suspended. He was forbidden from selling information to foreign buyers for five years.

AFTER SERVING HIS four months at a medium-security prison in Michigan, Posey regained the helm at Newport Aeronautical. But he was about to make a whole new group of enemies. Starting in 1998, the company began fielding lawsuits from some of the world's biggest defense contractors. A lawyer at Lockheed Martin remembers sending letters to Newport Aeronautical telling it to stop selling the company's data. But asking nicely was never going to work with Posey. In 2000, Airbus asked a federal court to prohibit Newport Aeronautical from advertising, reproducing, selling, or publishing any of its copyright materials. The court issued such an injunction, under pain of \$50,000 in damages. Posey agreed to Airbus' terms to settle the case, and Newport Aeronautical seems to have entered into similar consent judgments with Bell, Kiddie, Boeing, and Moog.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 made business even harder for Newport Aeronautical. FOIA's old cosponsor, Donald Rumsfeld, was now in charge of the most secretive Department of Defense in a generation, as public sentiment granted the George W. Bush administration a wide berth to wage its war on terror. Against this backdrop, the Pentagon decided to tighten its rules on handing out critical data to

companies like Newport Aeronautical: It would now provide technical orders to commercial customers only if they could link requests to a specific government contract.

Posey either didn't hear of the new rule or decided to test its limits. In August 2002, workers at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia got in touch with the US Air Force Office of Special Investigations. Posey, they alleged, had just requested the entire technical manual library for the C-130 aircraft on compact discs. When a database administrator at Robins told Posey about the Pentagon's new policy, they said, Posey became upset. "Mr. Posey continued to try and persuade me that he had a legitimate reason for getting this technical data," wrote the administrator in a sworn statement to the Office of Special Investigations. "He also used what I considered intimidation, threatening to involve the DOD and take legal measures because [the base] refused his request."

The employees also claimed that Newport Aeronautical had requested technical data in "mass quantities" from the base in the past and that it was in possession of documents that were classified Secret.

The Air Force opened an investigation, the results of which were later made public in a lawsuit. It noted Posey's history of work with Arif Durrani, the Pakistani arms dealer, who had been convicted of shipping Hawk missile parts to Iran as part of the infamous Iran-Contra affair. It also claimed that Posey helped provide technical data to another arms dealer, Amanullah Khan, who was later convicted of attempting to sell fighter aircraft parts to undercover federal agents he thought were Chinese arms dealers. The investigators reported that Newport Aeronautical and Posey had also been investigated by US Customs agents in Boston; New York; Washington; and Oxnard, California. None seem to have resulted in any charges.

Although Posey had threatened to sue the DOD, the Pentagon struck first. In early 2003, undercover Special Investigations agents attempted a sting operation against Newport Aeronautical, asking Posey to supply a technical manual for the C-130 that was classified as Secret. According to the investigation report, Posey quoted a price of \$650 for the manual but noted that the data was "restricted." Posey is reported as saying that "he may have one of his workers sweet-talk someone" in order to secure the documents. The sale was never consummated and, as with the earlier investigations, the inquiries stalled.

But the post-9/11 restrictions on what information the DOD would share were more than Posey could bear. In 2004, Newport Aeronautical finally did sue the Air Force for not fulfilling a number of FOIA requests. The complaint claimed that vendor lock had cost the DOD and America's allies billions of dollars and that Newport Aeronautical, by providing data quickly to contractors, had increased small business participation.

"Potential competitors who relied on NAS for data could not bid on solicitations issued by the Air Force, other DOD buying agencies and our allies," Posey wrote. "As a result, original equipment manufacturers were often the only manufacturer with data. This further resulted in awards of overpriced noncompetitive contracts."

His lawsuit dragged on for more than five years before the court granted the Air Force's motion to dismiss. The government would be allowed to withhold unclassified technical manuals with military or space applications. The universe of documents available through FOIA had shrunk once more, and Newport Aeronautical would have to look elsewhere for the information its customers wanted.

IN EARLY 2008, even before the suit against the Air Force was settled, Newport Aeronautical had begun developing another strategy for obtaining the information its customers wanted—one that would move the company past FOIA resales and into shadier territory. According to his LinkedIn account, Posey's son, George MacArthur Posey IV—known to the family as "Mac"—joined the company in 2009.

For more than a decade, Mac and a fellow Newport Aeronautical employee made document requests directly to a Florida woman named Melony Erice, who worked in sales for a number of private aerospace companies. She was never a Pentagon employee. Nevertheless, she managed to fulfill Newport's requests. In all, the company paid Erice more than \$589,000 for over 5,000 technical manuals and drawings.

According to court documents, those manuals and drawings in turn earned the company over \$2.1 million. On Facebook, Posey boasted to his friends about Mac: “He makes sure we always get paid. He’s our Ray Donovan, if you know what I mean. Doesn’t miss a dime.”

“Now my son wants to take over and expand what I have started,” Posey posted on Facebook in 2013. “He already has, and has impressed me with his expertise of business management. But he still doesn’t know the difference between Cessna 150 and a B-52, but he does know money coming in and money going out. Proud dad.”

Where was Erice getting the information? Not through her own FOIA requests, as it turned out. In 2019, military investigators stumbled on email correspondence between Erice and a civilian employee of the US Navy in Philadelphia, who was using his access to military databases to illegally download files that Newport Aeronautical wanted. He then split the proceeds with Erice, with whom he had previously lived.

Investigators followed the trail of thousands of emails from Erice to accounts associated with Newport Aeronautical, gaining a search warrant for them in late 2019. There, they found evidence that she had not been Newport Aeronautical’s only backchannel for technical manuals and drawings. Filings allege that starting in February 2015, Mac had also bought over 870 documents for nearly \$83,000 from a quality-control manager at a Florida aerospace contractor who had access to military data as part of his job. On September 2, 2020, 33 years after Posey’s house was raided by federal agents while his wife and toddler son watched, federal agents came to arrest Mac.

Mac was charged with one count of conspiracy to steal government property and to commit bribery of a federal public official, as well as three counts of receiving stolen government property. He has since been appearing, often remotely due to the Covid-19 pandemic, before the same US District Court as Posey did. Like his father before him, Mac is also facing the possibility of 10 years in prison. While the government’s criminal complaint notes George Posey’s position as CEO of Newport Aeronautical and shows him receiving an emailed invoice from Erice for stolen documents, he has not been charged.

LAW PROFESSOR MARGARET Kwoka has spent the past decade studying the evolution of FOIA. She thinks Representative Moss would be both delighted and horrified to see the results of his efforts to force the government into transparency. “Delighted that so many people have found so many uses for this law that probably he couldn’t have imagined,” she says. “Horrified by just the sheer bureaucracy that it has created.”

At least 125 countries around the world now have freedom-of-information laws, many modeled on FOIA. But while the US legislation has been amended about every decade since the success of Moss’ crusade, Kwoka notes that the changes have failed to prevent ever-lengthening delays and restrictions. These include ever-broader interpretations of exemptions that allow agencies to withhold behind-the-scenes deliberations and many corporate secrets. “Most redactions or denials based on claimed exemptions from agencies go unchallenged because most people don’t have the time or money to appeal,” says Kwoka.

For all the Posey family’s law-breaking, Newport Aeronautical has been one of the very few commercial requesters attempting to hold the military to Moss’ principles of radical transparency. “They may be more exceptional than regular,” says Kwoka. “Most data resellers for sure don’t go to court, either ever or hardly ever. They get what they can get, and then they sell it.”

Though most of Newport Aeronautical’s cases ultimately failed, they set precedents that have since been cited in dozens of subsequent FOIA cases, including those brought by environmental, digital-privacy, and government-spending activists, some of which have reached the United States Supreme Court.

The Poseys’ lawsuits may have helped rein in the government’s tendency to hoard information, but the family hardly makes for a set of uncomplicated FOIA heroes. George Posey was the first person—and one of only a handful ever—to be convicted of violating the US Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, and Mac has pleaded guilty to conspiracy and receiving stolen government property.

	<p>Nevertheless, the Poseys might yet be gearing up to start a new family business. At the start of this year, Mac incorporated Back Bay Packaging, based at the same address as Newport Aeronautical's office. The nature of that business, like so much of what went on at Newport Aeronautical Sales over the past five decades, remains a mystery.</p> <p>The agencies investigating the Poseys almost certainly have more details in their files that have not been made public, and last winter I asked all of them for interviews. Most refused outright, although the US Air Force Office of Special Investigations suggested that I file a FOIA request to learn more. I'm still awaiting a response.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Russia stage 'provocation' at nuclear plant?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/18/un-chief-presidents-zelenskiy-erdogan-talks-ukraine-grain-nuclear-plant
GIST	<p>Ukraine's military intelligence has warned that Russian forces may be preparing to stage a "provocation" at a nuclear power plant they control, as the UN secretary general, António Guterres, called for an urgent withdrawal of military forces and equipment from the site.</p> <p>Guterres, on his second visit to Ukraine since the Russian invasion, joined the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, and the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for meetings and then a press conference in the western city of Lviv.</p> <p>"We are worried. We don't want another Chernobyl," Erdoğan said. It was the first visit to Ukraine by Turkey's leader, who has been a key intermediary in negotiations with Russia.</p> <p>Zelenskiy said he agreed with Guterres on a framework for a visit by the International Atomic Energy Agency watchdog to inspect the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, the largest in Europe. It was taken over by Russian forces in March but is still being run by Ukrainians.</p> <p>The UN chief called on Russian forces to leave with their military equipment, amid fears that fighting around the site could lead to a deadly disaster. Moscow and Kyiv have traded accusations of shelling the site.</p> <p>"The facility must not be used as part of any military operation. Instead, agreement is urgently needed to re-establish Zaporizhzhia's purely civilian infrastructure and to ensure the safety of the area," Guterres said.</p> <p>Video footage shared online by a New York Times reporter showed at least five apparently military trucks parked inside the plant's engine room near the turbo generator.</p> <p>In the hours before the international summit in western Ukraine, Russia announced it had deployed warplanes armed with hypersonic missiles to its Kaliningrad region, an enclave on the Baltic Sea that borders the EU and Nato members Poland and Lithuania.</p> <p>The commander of its Black Sea fleet has also been replaced, the Russian RIA news agency said, in one of the most high-profile military sackings since the invasion. It came after a series of humiliations for the fleet, including the sinking of its flagship Moskva cruiser and an attack on a key airbase in Crimea.</p> <p>Inside Ukraine, Russian forces stepped up attacks on Kharkiv, the country's second largest city, ahead of the summit in Lviv. In attacks overnight and early on Thursday morning, at least 11 people were killed and more than 40 injured and a residential block was destroyed.</p> <p>Ukraine's defence intelligence agency said it was concerned that Russia had plans to stage an incident at the plant on Friday, and had information that staff with Russia's Rosatom nuclear company had left the site.</p>

Russian state media had already accused Ukraine of planning a “provocation” at the plant to coincide with the UN leader’s trip, raising fears that Russia’s military could be planning a “false-flag attack”. When Guterres travelled to Kyiv in April, Moscow carried out an airstrike on the city.

On Wednesday, Ukraine’s interior minister, Denys Monastyrsky, said Ukraine must “prepare for all scenarios”, during a drill for emergency workers in Zaporizhzhia.

On Wednesday, the Nato secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, warned Russia’s seizure of the plant had “raised the risk of a nuclear accident or incident” and accused Moscow of being “reckless” by using the area as a staging platform to launch artillery attacks on Ukrainian forces.

Russia said it may shut down the plant, claiming backup support systems had been damaged in strikes. Igor Kirillov, the head of the radioactive, chemical and biological defence force, said if there was an accident at the site, radioactive material would cover Poland, Germany and Slovenia.

Ukraine’s hydrometeorological institute also warned of contamination spreading across Europe, a BBC journalist [reported](#).

Two issues are causing [deepening anxiety about the situation](#) at the Zaporizhzhia plant. International nuclear safety officials have become concerned over the lack of spare parts, access for routine maintenance of the reactors, and contact with staff, all of which have been disrupted by the conflict.

A second issue is shelling around the plant. According to Energoatom, Ukraine’s nuclear authority, the impacts from Grad missiles earlier this month were close to the spent fuel storage area, with the plant’s operator claiming Russian troops “aimed specifically” at the containers, despite the Russian military’s presence at the site.

Russia accuses Ukraine of carrying out the shelling.

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HEADLINE	08/18 Fires, explosions in Russia, Crimea
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/18/fires-and-explosions-reported-at-military-targets-in-russia-and-crimea
GIST	<p>Fires and explosions have been reported at military targets inside Russia and Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine, in the latest of a string of apparent sabotage missions deep into Russian-held territory.</p> <p>Two Russian villages were evacuated after a blaze at a munitions depot near the Ukrainian border in Belgorod province. “An ammunition depot caught fire near the village of Timonovo”, less than 50km from the border, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said in a statement, adding that no casualties were reported.</p> <p>At least four explosions hit near the major Belbek airbase, north of Sevastopol in the occupied Crimean peninsula. The pro-Russia governor of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said: “There is no damage. No one was hurt.”</p> <p>Air defences were also activated near Kerch, the city at the Crimean end of a bridge to mainland Russia, which is a strategically vital supply route that many in Ukraine would like to see destroyed. Local media said a Ukrainian drone was shot down.</p> <p>The Ukrainian defence ministry put out a tongue-in-cheek tweet after footage of fires in Timonovo spread, with the brief message “smoking kills!”. Officials have previously joked that explosions and fires at military targets in occupied Crimea were caused by “careless smokers”.</p>

The overnight incidents on Thursday came soon after devastating explosions at [a major airbase](#) and [a munitions depot in Crimea](#). After those attacks, many Russians raced to leave the peninsula, with a record 38,000 cars crossing on Tuesday.

Ukraine's president, [Volodymyr Zelenskiy](#), said on Wednesday that panicking Russians have realised that Crimea is "not a place for them" and hinted more attacks could lie ahead.

He urged Ukrainians to stay away from enemy command posts and logistics bases. "Do not approach the military objects of the Russian army," he said.

Crimea is a key hub for the Russian invasion and the UK Ministry of Defence said Russia's military leaders were likely to be "increasingly concerned" about the surge of setbacks there, even if Moscow has dismissed them as local "sabotage".

Six alleged Islamist extremists were detained on Wednesday, according to Crimea's Moscow-appointed head, Sergey Aksyonov. It was not clear what relation – if any – those arrested had to the recent attacks.

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HEADLINE	08/19 Indonesia: Xi, Putin to attend G20 summit
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/19/xi-and-putin-will-come-to-g20-says-indonesian-presidents-adviser
GIST	<p>Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin will attend the G20 summit on the resort island of Bali this November, an adviser to the Indonesian president has said.</p> <p>Andi Widjajanto – unofficial adviser to President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo – told Reuters the Chinese and Russian leaders would attend.</p> <p>On Thursday, Widodo told Bloomberg News that both leaders had given him their assurances. Indonesian presidential officials did not respond to requests for confirmation of the report.</p> <p>The Chinese foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. A Kremlin spokesperson declined to comment to Bloomberg, but another official familiar with the situation told the news agency Putin planned to attend.</p> <p>The trip would be significant given it would be Xi's first time outside China since January 2020, when he visited Myanmar. Since then, Xi made his only trip outside the Chinese mainland on 30 June, visiting Hong Kong to mark the 25th anniversary of its handover from British control.</p> <p>China maintains a zero-Covid policy that has all but shut its borders to international travel.</p> <p>Xi is widely expected to secure a precedent-breaking third leadership term during a congress of the ruling Communist party scheduled for this northern autumn, most likely before he would head to Bali for the mid-November G20 gathering.</p> <p>No dates have been announced for the party congress, but the last two took place in late October and early November.</p> <p>Chinese officials are also reportedly making plans for a November meeting in south-east Asia between Xi and Joe Biden. The US president is expected to attend the G20 summit in Bali.</p> <p>As head of the G20 this year, Indonesia has faced pressure from western countries to withdraw its invitation to Putin over Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Indonesia has also invited the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, to attend.</p>

	Widodo has sought to position himself as mediator, and has in recent months travelled to meet both the Ukrainian and Russian presidents to call for an end to the war and seek ways to ease the global food crisis.
	This week, Widodo said both countries have accepted Indonesia as a “bridge of peace”.
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HEADLINE	08/18 Russia troops struggle, enter mercenaries
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/wagner-mercenaries-enter-the-spotlight-as-russian-troops-struggle-in-ukraine-11660826515?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>In May, Italian television journalists asked Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov about the role Wagner Group, a private military company, was playing as Moscow began its offensive in Ukraine’s eastern Donbas area.</p> <p>He dismissed the question. Wagner, he said, wasn’t deployed in Ukraine and had no connection to the Russian state.</p> <p>But, according to Ukrainian commanders, Wagner’s fighters have proven indispensable in Russia’s few successes in Donbas. Once ordered to minimize Wagner’s role, Russia’s official media is awash with reportage about the heroic exploits of the company, which likes to call itself the “orchestra” and its soldiers “musicians.”</p> <p>Wagner’s owner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, known as President Vladimir Putin’s chef because of his catering contracts with the Kremlin and wanted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for alleged interference in U.S. elections, has recently been awarded Russia’s highest merit, the Hero of Russia.</p> <p>Wagner’s recruitment billboards have appeared on the streets of several Russian cities. “The W Orchestra awaits you,” proclaimed one erected in July in Yekaterinburg, with Wagner’s trademark skull logo on a harmonica in the hands of one of the fighters.</p> <p>In all, the company, which also operates under the name Liga in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine, has opened recruitment centers in 26 Russian cities, according to Ukrainian military intelligence, and now is expanding its drive to prisons all over Russia as it seeks to replenish its losses.</p> <p>“They achieve successes on the front where others shy away,” said Igor Girkin, a former Russian intelligence colonel whose takeover of the city of Slovyansk sparked violence in Donbas in 2014, “because they execute their mission regardless of the casualties that they take.” Mr. Girkin compared Wagner to the Nazi SS Totenkopf, or Dead Head, division, which didn’t spare its troops in battle—quipping that some Wagner commanders might consider it a compliment.</p> <p>Mr. Prigozhin, who has been repeatedly photographed at Wagner’s bases in Donbas, said in written answers to questions that he “doesn’t know anything” about Wagner and that Mr. Girkin’s statements “require examining his head to see if it’s dead.”</p> <p>The Kremlin and Russia’s Ministry of Defense didn’t reply to requests for comment.</p> <p>Russia’s new reliance on Wagner stems in part from the fact that elite Russian units that would otherwise carry out such missions have been battered near Kyiv because of Moscow’s miscalculations in the early weeks of the war, said retired Ukrainian Maj. Gen. Victor Yahun, a former deputy chief of Ukraine’s SBU intelligence service.</p> <p>“The Russian Federation has a huge problem with motivated units. The only motivation that remains is money,” he said. “They have nobody left for storming and breakthroughs, and Wagner is their only combat unit that does it without asking any questions—even if it takes losses of 10% to 15% after every mission.”</p>

Wagner fighters are paid vastly better than the regular Russian troops. According to a research note by Ukraine's GUR military intelligence service seen by The Wall Street Journal, Wagner troops receive 350,000 rubles, equivalent to \$5,790, a month, plus premiums of 150,000 to 700,000 rubles depending on mission success and role, with additional bonuses for killing Ukrainian soldiers. Wagner's own advertisements on social media mention a starting pay of 250,000 rubles.

In May, the main Russian offensive in Donbas stalled near Izyum and Russian attempts at a pontoon crossing of the Siverskyi Donets River ended in a rout. Then, Wagner's men finally managed to break Ukrainian fortifications near the town of Popasna. That allowed Russian forces to fan out in what they called "flower of Popasna" offensive in the following weeks, taking the cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk. Wagner captured the Vuhlehirsk power station in July and, according to Russian and Ukrainian officials, now is spearheading the fighting to break Ukraine's next line of defenses in the city of Bakhmut.

"They bleed just like everyone else, they fall like everyone else, but you do feel their level of preparation," said Ukrainian Capt. Oleksandr Buntov, who commanded a reconnaissance unit engaged in close combat with Wagner in Popasna and later near Lysychansk. "It's not the usual Russian infantry. They know reconnaissance, and you can see it from how they walk and how they move. They also know how to call in artillery and air support."

While Wagner fought against Ukrainian forces in Donbas as early as in 2014, [the company's main focus](#) over the past eight years has been in Syria, Libya, Mali and the Central African Republic, where it often offered its services to Russian-backed leaders in exchange for a share of natural-resource revenues, according to U.S. officials. "They are professional killers who work in coordinated groups, and it's not the first war for them," said Ukraine's national security adviser, Oleksiy Danilov.

Unlike other, smaller private Russian military companies that also operate in Ukraine, such as Redut and Patriot, Wagner has its own tanks, heavy artillery, air defenses and multiple-launch rocket systems. It also operates combat aircraft. At least two jets piloted by Wagner staff—a retired Russian major general and a retired Belarusian colonel—have been shot down by Ukrainian forces near Popasna. The major general, Kanamat Botashev, was fired from the Russian military and fined 5 million rubles in 2013 after he took an Su-27 jet fighter on an unauthorized joy ride and crashed it.

In the Ukrainian battlefield, Wagner soldiers today operate under the overall command of the Russian military unit responsible for the area, and are integrated into the Russian military's logistics chain, according to GUR. "It's a mistake to call them a private military company—Wagner is just another way of serving in Russia's armed forces," said Mr. Yahun.

Part of Wagner's recent coming out has been dictated by its recruitment needs after heavy losses in Donbas. Some of these casualties have been caused by the company's new hunger for publicity: A deadly Ukrainian strike on the company's base in Popasna on Saturday was made possible by Mr. Prigozhin's posing for photos with a Russian military correspondent outside the facility. These photos, posted by the correspondent online, allowed the Ukrainian artillery to easily identify the building, according to Ukrainian officials. The administrator of Wagner's Telegram social-media channel was among those killed in that strike, according to posts by other Wagner fighters.

Wagner's heavy losses since May and June mean that the group now has to scrape the barrel for new recruits, lowering its once relatively stringent standards. While requirements haven't changed for mercenaries seeking work in Africa or the Middle East, those willing to fight in Ukraine no longer have to be healthy, experienced or particularly fit. "They won't look too much at the norms, just don't be a complete sack," explained a Wagner recruitment note on a Russian social-media network.

The requirement for men over 35 years of age is only that they are able to run 1 kilometer in 4 minutes and 20 seconds, and the only medical conditions precluding service are HIV and hepatitis, according to the

notice. The requirement for healthy teeth has been waived and a criminal conviction no longer is a problem, as long as it wasn't for sex crimes, the note said.

In fact, according to Russian prisoner-rights groups, the country's detention facilities have now become a prime recruitment ground for Wagner units in Ukraine. Mr. Prigozhin, who himself served time in prison in Soviet times, has been personally touring detention facilities, with his Hero of Russia star on his lapel, promising inmates freedom and money in exchange for going to war, Russian prisoner-rights groups say.

Andrey Bogatov, a senior member of Wagner and another holder of the Hero of Russia award, this month confirmed the prisoner recruitment, saying that Wagner cares for the lives of its troops "regardless of whether they are former soldiers or former convicts."

Mr. Prigozhin, in written answers to questions, said that he hadn't just visited prison facilities but himself spent 10 years behind bars.

In Russia's detention facilities, inmates are told by Wagner that their convictions would be wiped out after six months of service in Ukraine, even though no such procedure is available under Russian law, said Olga Romanova, head of the Russia Behind Bars prisoner-rights organization.

"This situation is completely outside any legal field," she said. Few of these prisoner recruits have any military experience because, as a rule, they have been in and out of detention facilities since teenage years, Ms. Romanova added. Some 200 such inmates have already died in Ukraine since Wagner began deploying them to the front lines last month, she said. "They are just cannon fodder."

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HEADLINE	08/18 Home sales drop for sixth straight month
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/existing-home-sales-prices-housing-market-july-2022-11660774574?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	<p>U.S. existing home sales fell in July for the sixth straight month, the longest streak of declines in more than eight years, as higher mortgage rates and a shortage of homes for sale are cooling this once red-hot market.</p> <p>Sales of previously owned homes dipped 5.9% in July from the previous month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.81 million, the National Association of Realtors said Thursday. That was the weakest pace of sales since November 2015, excluding the three-month pandemic-related drop in the spring of 2020. July sales tumbled 20.2% from a year ago.</p> <p>The drop-off is the latest sign that the formerly booming housing market is stalling out. Home-building is also drying up, and mortgage applications are falling as more buyers keep to the sidelines.</p> <p>"We are in a housing recession," said Lawrence Yun, chief economist for the National Association of Realtors.</p> <p>That is hurting potential buyers while benefiting existing homeowners, many of whom locked in their mortgages at lower rates and have seen their home values soar, he added.</p> <p>The housing market went into this year the hottest it has been in about 15 years. The pandemic spurred new demand once restrictions loosened around the middle of 2020. Many home buyers looked for more space to work from home while others were willing to move farther from their office as remote work became more widespread. Near-record-low mortgage rates added fuel to the rally, and bidding wars became commonplace throughout the U.S.</p> <p>Now, sales are slowing and the relentless rise in home prices is showing some signs of easing after repeated new highs. The median sales price of an existing home fell to \$403,800 from a record \$413,800 in June, the first decline since January, according to NAR.</p>

While a dip in prices in July isn't uncommon, economists have been watching for signs of easing price pressures as demand slides. Some expect price declines might arrive by year-end.

"We're going to see a deceleration as we get towards the end of this year and early next year," said Scott Murray, a financial-markets economist at Nationwide.

Prices should be more stable next year, he added, "which I think is a really good sign not just for the housing market but for inflation."

Higher borrowing rates have taken much of the air out of the market, economists say. The Federal Reserve has been raising interest rates aggressively to cool inflation, and mortgage rates have climbed in response.

This week, the average 30-year mortgage rate stood at 5.13%, according to housing-finance agency [Freddie Mac](#). That is slightly lower than last week but still well above the 2.86% rate of a year ago. Before this year, mortgage rates hadn't topped 5% since 2011.

The combination of high prices and rising interest rates [has pushed home-buying affordability to its lowest level](#) in decades. People entering the housing market now typically pay 25% of their income on mortgage payments, up from 15% before the pandemic, Mr. Yun said.

Part of the problem is that there aren't enough homes for sale, which means houses don't sit on the market very long despite high prices. The median home sold in 14 days in July, matching the fastest pace on record, according to NAR.

At the end of July there were 1.31 million homes available, up 4.8% from June, according to NAR, a sign that the market might be starting to loosen up.

"Just in the last 45 days, it's a whole new market," said Quentin Dane, a real-estate agent in Raleigh, N.C. The number of new leads coming into his brokerage has dropped by half, he said, and the inventory of homes for sale has increased. "We're definitely seeing buyers take a breath," he said.

Almost 16% of home-purchase agreements [that were pending in July fell through](#), the highest level since April 2020, when the pandemic disrupted the market, according to real-estate brokerage [Redfin](#) Corp. Some buyers are backing out if sellers won't renegotiate the price or make requested repairs, and others are worried about a potential recession, Redfin said.

Nicholas and Katie Carosella started house hunting in the Philadelphia suburbs this spring and lost out to other buyers on two offers. In June, the market started to shift, Mr. Carosella said.

"All of a sudden, as mortgage rates continued to climb, it seemed like there was a frenzy of houses coming on the market," he said. Homes started sitting on the market longer, especially those that needed renovations. "Buyers were becoming pickier," he said.

The Carosellas had their third offer accepted in June for about 3.3% above the asking price. When they listed their current home for sale in July, it also sold slightly over the asking price.

The share of first-time buyers in the market fell to 29% in July, from 30% a year earlier. About 24% of July existing-home sales were purchased in cash, up from 23% in the same month a year ago, NAR said. Existing-home sales fell the most month-over-month in the West, down 30.4% from a year ago, and in the South, down 19.6%.

Other indicators this week also point to a housing market that is grinding down.

	<p>A measure of U.S. home-builder confidence fell for the eighth straight month in August to the lowest level since May 2020, the National Association of Home Builders said this week. About one-fifth of builders surveyed said they had reduced prices in the past month, NAHB said.</p> <p>Mortgage applications fell 2.3% last week from the preceding week, the Mortgage Bankers Association said Wednesday.</p> <p>And housing starts, a measure of U.S. home-building, fell 9.6% in July from June, the Commerce Department said this week. Residential permits, which can be a bellwether for future home construction, fell 1.3%.</p> <p>Private-sector residential spending fell at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 14% in the second quarter, according to the Commerce Department. That contributed to a 0.9% decline in overall economic growth during the quarter.</p> <p>Bill Adams, chief economist at Comerica Bank, said he expects residential investment to fall at a 16% rate in the third quarter, now under way.</p> <p>“Housing has gone from a tailwind in 2020 and 2021 to a big headwind for the economy,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Shift: govt. plans to end Covid coverage
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/biden-administration-plans-for-end-of-covid-19-shot-treatment-coverage-11660838418?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>The Biden administration is planning for an end to its practice of paying for Covid-19 shots and treatments, shifting more control of pricing and coverage to the healthcare industry in ways that could generate sales for companies—and costs for consumers—for years to come.</p> <p>The Department of Health and Human Services intends to hold a planning session on Aug. 30 that would bring together representatives from drugmakers, pharmacies and state health departments with a stake in a Covid-19 treatment industry.</p> <p>Both the Trump and Biden administrations always planned to shift the bill for Covid-19 shots and treatments from the federal government to individuals eventually. With Covid-19 cases dropping, more activities resuming and funding for the pandemic response running short, officials are now working to map out that transition.</p> <p>Shifting payments for Covid-19 drugs and vaccines to the commercial market is expected to take months, an HHS spokesman said. At the meeting this month, officials and company representatives are expected to discuss reimbursement and coverage, regulatory issues and access to vaccines and treatment for the uninsured.</p> <p>“We’ve known at some point we’d need to move over into the commercial market, and we’re approaching that time now,” said Dawn O’Connell, assistant secretary at HHS for preparedness and response. “We don’t want to do it by fiat.”</p> <p>The change presents challenges including how to make shots and treatments available to the roughly 30 million people without insurance coverage. The federal government has been purchasing Covid-19 vaccines and treatments and making them available at no cost during the pandemic.</p> <p>“There are issues of reimbursement, equitable access to vaccines and treatment, and distribution that need to be resolved,” said Anne McDonald Pritchett, senior vice president at Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, or PhRMA, an industry trade group.</p>

The change also portends billions of dollars in potential profits for pharmaceutical companies such as [Moderna](#) Inc. and [Pfizer](#) Inc. as well as its partner [BioNTech](#) SE. Pfizer [reported \\$8.1 billion in global sales](#) during the second quarter for its Covid-19 treatment, Paxlovid.

As of February, companies including Pfizer and Moderna had reported at least \$79 billion in combined global sales of Covid-19 vaccines and treatments for 2021, according to a Wall Street Journal review of earnings reports.

The administration [had requested as much as \\$30 billion](#) from Congress for antivirals, testing and shots against future variants, among other measures. Republicans [said no new money should be allocated](#) until existing Covid-19 relief funding was spent.

As of mid-February, no money was left in HHS's public-health and social-services emergency fund for healthcare providers. The administration in August stopped supplying monoclonal antibody treatments. [Eli Lilly & Co. has shifted to commercial sales](#) of its Covid-19 monoclonal antibody treatment to states, hospitals and other healthcare providers. The administration has already [signed purchase agreements for updated vaccine doses](#) for the fall.

Switching vaccine purchasing to the commercial market would mean that each insurer and pharmacy benefit manager would be negotiating with drug manufacturers and prices would likely be higher than what the federal government has paid, said Larry Levitt, executive vice president for health policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation. Insurers would have to start paying for the vaccines, he said, likely raising premiums.

"Without the government purchasing vaccine doses in advance, the U.S. may fall behind other countries in getting quick access to boosters and new variant-specific vaccines," Mr. Levitt said.

Other challenges include the timetable each drug or vaccine manufacturer has for when they want to move into the commercial market. Also, Medicare and Medicaid, federal insurance programs for older and lower-income people respectively, [don't cover antivirals](#) because they are only approved under an emergency-use authorization.

"We want to make sure everyone who needs access gets access," Ms. O'Connell said.

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HEADLINE	08/17 More are breaking up with work friends
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/forget-work-friends-more-americans-are-all-business-on-the-job-11660736232?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos2
GIST	<p>In the months before he left his last job in 2020, Michael Trotter came to dread an end-of-day question from colleagues: Do you want to grab a drink?</p> <p>"I don't want to put in eight, nine, 10 hours and go out and have a beer—and talk about work for another four hours," says Mr. Trotter, a 53-year-old database administrator in Cupertino, Calif.</p> <p>Many workers say that forging office friendships has become harder and less of a priority over the past two years, during which millions of working Americans changed jobs or worked from home.</p> <p>After more than two pandemic years, some professionals are also "quiet quitting" and making other moves to carve out more work-life balance. That includes cutting back on workplace socializing and bonding.</p> <p>The role of workplace friendships is now getting a big test, as companies seek to rebuild office cultures with many of their employees still remote part of the time. Among nearly 4,000 hybrid workers surveyed by Gallup in June, 17% said they had a "best friend" at work, down from 22% who said they</p>

did in 2019. For all workers, including those fully remote or on-site, the share who reported a close work friend slipped less, to 19% from 20%.

Meanwhile, [the data](#) suggests the link between having a best work friend and feeling committed to a job has grown stronger over the past three years—meaning, workers who don’t have one are more likely to want to leave. About 15% of people without a best friend at work reported being extremely satisfied at work this year, fewer than the 23% who said the same in 2019, according to Gallup, which has been surveying employees on their work friendships for more than two decades.

Mr. Trotter says the after-work socializing he used to do on occasion felt draining—and cut deeper into his time with family. In his new, largely remote position, he says he has no interest in building work friendships. After two years, he says he has met two teammates in person, and only for a few minutes each.

“It makes it a lot easier if, when you’re done with work, you’re done with work,” he says.

The reliance on Zoom calls and other virtual forums at work has made cultivating and keeping up work friendships taxing for many people, said Julianna Pillemer, a professor at New York University’s Stern School of Business who has studied work relationships.

“Friendships at work are this bleeding of worlds,” she said. “If you’re already feeling like, ‘I have no separation between these things,’ I can really understand the drive to not spend any more time, even if it’s socializing, with co-workers.”

Chad Eslinger, a mechanical engineer from the Minneapolis area and a self-described extrovert, says he longs for the earlier days in his career when he and his work friends would get together for karaoke and other social outings. At his current job, he said it seems that co-workers place less of a priority on being social.

“I do actually want to have [real friends at work](#),” says Mr. Eslinger, 45, who says he misses work gatherings “that are not about being productive and being robots.”

In a recent survey of nearly 1,000 U.S. employees, relationships with co-workers tied with recognition as the least important factors in job satisfaction. (Compensation and work-life balance ranked as the most important of the 14 choices, according to online software marketplace Capterra, which conducted the survey.) Nearly two-thirds of those who had experienced high turnover at their companies said it had become less worthwhile for them to socialize and [get to know colleagues](#).

Some employers are trying to help co-workers cultivate such bonds. This summer, KPMG brought its 2,800-person intern class to a lake house training facility in Orlando, Fla., complete with social venues, guest rooms and a gym. A spokesperson said the company hopes that the in-person socializing and networking will help many interns ultimately accept full-time job offers from the accounting firm.

Software giant [Salesforce.com](#) is using a resort property south of San Francisco as a [work-and-wellness center for its nearly 70,000 staff](#). Stays at Salesforce’s retreat will combine work and training with wellness activities such as yoga and hiking to encourage social bonding, the company says.

The youngest professionals entered the workplace just as the pandemic arrived and remote work took off, keeping co-workers physically distant from one another. Many 20-somethings say they are now not itching to make a change. Half of workers between the ages of 18 and 25 said workplace friendships were “not at all important,” or “minimally important,” according to the survey by Capterra, which is owned by Gartner Digital Markets.

Nathaniel Richards, a 22-year-old software engineer in Muskegon, Mich., describes himself as outgoing and says he wants to expand his friendship circle—just not at work. He says he worries, in part, that a

	<p>co-worker might react negatively to something he shared about his personal life, however banal, or relay it to a boss.</p> <p>“I don’t want to completely open up my life to people I have to work with,” he says.</p> <p>In a prior job, co-workers would meet virtually on Fridays to chat, he said. Yet when they talked about lawncare and their children, he didn’t have much to contribute, he says. He says he’d rather spend time with his fiancée, play Dungeons & Dragons or do freelance work.</p> <p>“That’s your time,” he says. “I value that more than making work friends.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Seattle police union: pending retirements
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3601362/seattle-police-unable-third-officers-eligible-retirement/
GIST	<p>The Seattle Police Department has 350 sworn officers eligible for retirement but cannot afford to lose more than 100 officers, according to the Seattle Police Guild President Mike Solan.</p> <p>The department has roughly 875 deployable officers and requires 1,400 to be considered fully staffed.</p> <p>That deficit is reflected in median response times for priority calls where risk to life is imminent: Seattle Police take upwards of five minutes to respond to those calls, depending on the precinct, according to information presented by interim Seattle Police Chief Adrian Diaz in June.</p> <p>“What I think is incredibly alarming is that we have 350 current people eligible to retire right now,” Solan told KTTN’s Jason Rantz.</p> <p>“If we lose even 100 more people, I don’t know what’s going to be left of this agency moving forward. I don’t know who they’re going to get to answer a [priority] call ... Already [we have] long waits for priority one calls for service.”</p> <p>Tuesday, the Seattle City Council approved a measure that allows the SPD to spend on new and lateral hire bonuses to the tune of individual payments of \$7,500 and \$30,000, respectively.</p> <p>The department will also establish a new talent recruitment wing with a hiring manager and several recruiters.</p> <p>Pundits such as Rantz claim that decision signals a potential new direction in the council, an abrupt departure from 2020 when progressive Democrats on the council rallied behind “defund the police,” arguably culminating in Councilmember Kshama Sawant’s move to allow Black Lives Matter protestors into Seattle City Hall during the peak of Seattle protests over the murder of George Floyd.</p> <p>“They’re going to be up for election soon. The optics are on all of their minds ... This is how far we’ve shifted. Now, they’re politically supporting more cops,” Solan continued.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/19 Spies misread Ukraine misled Kremlin
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interactive/2022/russia-fsb-intelligence-ukraine-war/?itid=hp-top-table-main
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — In the final days before the invasion of Ukraine, Russia’s security service began sending cryptic instructions to informants in Kyiv. Pack up and get out of the capital, the Kremlin collaborators were told, but leave behind the keys to your homes.</p>

The directions came from senior officers in a unit of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) with a prosaic name — the Department of Operational Information — but an ominous assignment: ensure the decapitation of the Ukrainian government and oversee the installation of a pro-Russian regime.

The messages were a measure of the confidence in that audacious plan. So certain were FSB operatives that they would soon control the levers of power in Kyiv, according to Ukrainian and Western security officials, that they spent the waning days before the war arranging safe houses or accommodations in informants' apartments and other locations for the planned influx of personnel.

"Have a successful trip!" one FSB officer told another who was being sent to oversee the expected occupation, according to intercepted communications. There is no indication that the recipient ever made it to the capital, as the FSB's plans collapsed amid the retreat of Russian forces in the early months of the war.

The communications exposing these preparations are part of a larger trove of sensitive materials obtained by Ukrainian and other security services and reviewed by The Washington Post. They offer rare insight into the activities of the FSB — a sprawling service that bears enormous responsibility for the failed Russian war plan and [the hubris that propelled it](#).

An agency whose domain includes internal security in Russia as well as espionage in the former Soviet states, the FSB has spent decades spying on Ukraine, attempting to co-opt its institutions, paying off officials and working to impede any perceived drift toward the West. No aspect of the FSB's intelligence mission outside Russia was more important than burrowing into all levels of Ukrainian society.

And yet, the agency failed to incapacitate Ukraine's government, foment any semblance of a pro-Russian groundswell or interrupt President Volodymyr Zelensky's hold on power. Its analysts either did not fathom how forcefully Ukraine would respond, Ukrainian and Western officials said, or did understand but couldn't or wouldn't convey such sober assessments to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The humiliations of Russia's military have largely overshadowed the failures of the FSB and other intelligence agencies. But in some ways, these have been even more incomprehensible and consequential, officials said, underpinning nearly every Kremlin war decision.

"The Russians were wrong by a mile," said a senior U.S. official with regular access to classified intelligence on Russia and its security services. "They set up an entire war effort to seize strategic objectives that were beyond their means," the official said. "Russia's mistake was really fundamental and strategic."

Ukraine's security services have an interest in discrediting Russia's spy agencies, but key details from the trove were corroborated by officials in Western governments.

The files show that the FSB unit responsible for Ukraine surged in size in the months leading up to the war and was counting on support from a vast network of paid agents in Ukraine's security apparatus. Some complied and sabotaged Ukraine's defenses, officials said, while others appear to have pocketed their FSB payments but balked at doing the Kremlin's bidding when the fighting started.

There are records that add to the mystery of Russian miscalculations. Extensive polls conducted for the FSB show that large segments of Ukraine's population were prepared to resist Russian encroachment, and that any expectation that Russian forces would be greeted as liberators was unfounded. Even so, officials said, the FSB continued to feed the Kremlin rosy assessments that Ukraine's masses would welcome the arrival of Russia's military and the restoration of Moscow-friendly rule.

"There was plenty of wishful thinking in the GRU and the military, but it started with the FSB," said a senior Western security official, using the GRU abbreviation for Russia's main military intelligence agency. "The sense that there would be flowers strewn in their path — that was an FSB exercise." He and

other security officials in Ukraine, the United States and Europe spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence.

Adhering to these erroneous assumptions, officials said, the FSB championed a war plan premised on the idea that a lightning assault on Kyiv would topple the government in a matter of days. Zelensky would be dead, captured or in exile, creating a political vacuum for FSB agents to fill.

Instead, FSB operatives who at one point had reached the outskirts of Kyiv had to retreat alongside Russian forces, Ukrainian security officials said. Rather than presiding over the formation of a new government in Kyiv, officials said, the FSB now faces difficult questions in Moscow about what its long history of operations against Ukraine — and the large sums that financed them — accomplished.

The FSB did not respond to requests for comment.

The FSB's plans and the efforts of Ukraine's security agencies to thwart them — with backing from the CIA, Britain's MI6 and other Western intelligence services — are part of a shadow war that has played out in parallel to Russia's military campaign. It is a conflict that was underway long before the Feb. 24 invasion, and its battle lines are blurred by the tangled, overlapping histories of Russian services and Ukrainian counterparts that began as offspring of the Soviet-era KGB.

Six months into the war, neither side appears to have a clear upper hand.

Ukraine's security agencies have scored notable victories. Early on, a Ukrainian nongovernmental organization published what it described as a roster of FSB operatives linked to the war effort, posting the identities and passport numbers of dozens of alleged spies in a move meant to disrupt the agency's plans and rattle its personnel. A person connected to the NGO, which is called Myrotvorets, or Peacemaker, said the data was obtained by Ukraine's security services. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity, citing threats to his security.

At the same time, Ukraine's main internal security service, the SBU, has struggled to rid its ranks of Russian moles and saboteurs. Several senior officers have been arrested and branded traitors by Zelensky, who took the extraordinary step in July of [removing SBU Director Ivan Bakanov](#) — a childhood friend — from his post.

Putin is not believed to have taken comparable action against any of his spy chiefs, despite the scale of their misjudgments.

“If your security services put such a high priority on understanding Ukraine, and your military plan is based on that understanding, how could they have gotten it so wrong?” said [William B. Taylor Jr.](#), who twice served as U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, including in an acting capacity in 2019. “How could they have assumed the Ukrainians wouldn't fight, that President Zelensky would not resist so valiantly? The disconnect has to be somewhere between the FSB and the very top.”

II

Among those making plans to arrive in Kyiv in late February was Igor Kovalenko, identified by Ukraine as a senior FSB officer who had for years been a principal handler of some of the most prominent Ukrainian politicians and government officials secretly on the Kremlin's payroll, including members of the opposition party co-chaired by Viktor Medvedchuk, a close friend of Putin.

An exchange Kovalenko had with an FSB subordinate on Feb. 18 suggests that he had his eye on an apartment in Kyiv's leafy Obolon neighborhood, overlooking the Dnieper River.

Intercepted communications show that Kovalenko asked for the address of the apartment and contact details for an FSB informant who occupied it. Ukrainian authorities said the resident was subsequently detained and questioned.

Kovalenko's subordinate sent back the address, phone numbers and code words used to communicate with the informant, who served in Zelensky's government, Ukrainian officials said.

The officials declined to identify the informant but said he admitted that he had received FSB instructions days before the invasion to pack his belongings, leave his keys and get out of the capital to ensure his personal security during the war's initial phase.

Other informants detained by Ukrainian authorities have provided similar accounts, one of the officials said. "They had been told, 'When you return, it will all be different.' "

Details published by Peacemaker and confirmed by Ukrainian security officials describe Kovalenko as a 47-year-old veteran of the spy service who in recent years was responsible for managing the agency's clandestine ties to Ukraine's parliament and main pro-Russian party.

Kovalenko did not respond to requests for comment.

Ukrainian authorities believe that Kovalenko may have been just miles from the capital in March, accompanying Russian forces then outside the city. But the FSB team assigned to set up operations in Kyiv had to abandon that plan when Russia's forces began their retreat, officials said.

The Obolon apartment was placed under surveillance by the SBU after the address surfaced in communications intercepts, officials said. Neither Kovalenko nor any other FSB officer ever turned up to claim the keys.

III

Kovalenko is a senior officer in an FSB unit — the Ninth Directorate of the Department of Operational Information — whose main purpose has for years been to ensure Ukraine's servility to Moscow.

The department is overseen by a senior FSB officer, Sergey Beseda, who started his career with the KGB in the late 1970s, according to Ukrainian officials, and was assigned to overseas posts including Cuba before returning to Moscow to head operations in Ukraine, Georgia and other former Soviet republics.

After protests erupted in Kyiv in late 2013 against the pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich, Beseda turned up in the Ukrainian capital urging Yanukovich to use deadly force to put down an uprising that would come to be known as the Maidan Revolution, Ukrainian officials said.

When the protesters prevailed, Yanukovich fled to Russia with a group of senior advisers suspected of working with Beseda's branch in the years that followed to bring a pro-Russian government back to power.

Anti-government protesters rally in Kyiv in December 2013 in what would become known as the Maidan Revolution. (Emily Sabens/The Washington Post; Brendan Hoffman/Getty; iStock)
That project appeared to take on new urgency in the two years leading up to the February invasion.

In 2019, the FSB began a major expansion of its Ukraine unit, a group that grew from 30 officers to as many as 160 last summer, according to Ukrainian officials who cited intercepted communications and other intelligence.

To entice recruits from other branches, the FSB offered bonuses and free housing in buildings adjacent to the FSB training academy on Michurinsky Prospekt in Moscow, officials said. Arriving officers were assigned territories in Ukraine and tasked with developing lists of collaborators to work with, as well as adversaries to neutralize.

At first, the surge was seen as another venture aimed at “returning Russian influence in Ukraine,” said a security official in Kyiv involved in tracking FSB operations. But in retrospect, it may have been an early signal that Russia was shifting focus, the official said, from shaping events in Ukraine to plotting “its seizure.”

As Russia’s military mobilization accelerated last year, Ukraine’s security services were inundated with additional intelligence from Western spy services, officials said.

On Jan. 12, CIA Director William J. Burns arrived in Kyiv with a detailed dossier on Russia’s plans and a team of accompanying U.S. officials who sought to convince Zelensky and his inner circle that war was imminent.

Yet when the CIA team departed, Ukraine’s spy chiefs gathered with Zelensky to deliver a follow-on briefing that was far more equivocal.

“We relayed all the information that the Americans had shared without any changes,” said a participant. But at the same time, the official said, “our information said that the Russians are not planning war” on such a large scale, and that judgment was given equal weight alongside the CIA warnings.

The final weeks before the invasion were punctuated by a flurry of contradictory intelligence reports and confusing signals from European officials.

Ten days after Burns’s visit, the British government declared that it had “information that indicates the Russian government is looking to install a pro-Russian leader in Kyiv as it considers whether to invade and occupy Ukraine.”

The British file identified a pro-Russian former member of Ukraine’s parliament, Yevhen Murayev, “as a potential candidate,” a claim that Murayev dismissed as “ridiculous and funny” in a response to the Associated Press. The British statement also listed former members of Yanukovych’s cabinet, alleging that they had links to Russian intelligence and that officers they were in contact with were “involved in the planning for an attack on Ukraine.”

About the same time, Ukraine’s security agencies picked up indications that FSB operatives were in direct communication with Russia’s airborne forces, officials said. Such direct interaction between the FSB and military units was so unusual, officials said, that it was regarded as a worrisome sign of joint operational planning.

That concern seems to have been well-placed. Russia’s airborne forces played a pivotal role in the capture of an airport in Hostomel, on the outskirts of Kyiv, in the early hours of the invasion. It was a key node for the anticipated assault on the capital, and FSB officers were observed there before Russian forces were driven from the airstrip, officials said.

Other late-arriving intelligence, however, seemed to cast doubt on the idea that Russia was even prepared for, let alone planning, full-scale combat.

In mid-February, Ukraine’s foreign intelligence service, the SZR, sent agents into Russia to carry out surveillance operations on military units. One team encountered a Potemkin village of Russian hardware, officials said, with dozens of parked tanks accompanied by a small security detail. No tank operators or maintenance crews were anywhere in the vicinity.

Elsewhere, Ukraine’s spies came upon a scene of disciplinary mayhem: lines of stranded Russian vehicles accompanied by troops who had bartered fuel and other supplies for alcohol. “A lot of them were drunk,” said a Ukrainian official who reviewed reports on what Ukraine’s spies had witnessed.

The scenes fed doubts among security advisers to Zelensky, some of whom were understandably disinclined to believe that their country's days might be numbered. Even now, months later, many continue to express disbelief that Russia pressed ahead so poorly prepared.

European officials also remained skeptical. In Kyiv on Feb. 8, French President Emmanuel Macron said he had received a personal assurance from Putin that Russia would not escalate the situation. Germany's spy chief, Bruno Kahl, had said days earlier that Putin's decision on whether to attack had "not yet been made." (Kahl was in Kyiv on the day the invasion began and had to be evacuated by car to Poland.)

In the end, many Ukrainian security officials believed that Russia's military buildup was largely a psychological ploy, but that Moscow might use missile strikes and incursions by airborne units and elite Spetsnaz troops to topple a government it saw as teetering. At the time, Zelensky's approval ratings had plummeted to around 26 percent as Ukraine faced an energy crisis and pressure on its currency that officials attributed to Russian sabotage.

"We didn't envision ... some classic invasion in Second World War style with tanks, artillery and infantry," a senior Ukrainian security official said. Ukraine was wrong about Russia's intentions, he said, but even Moscow may not have envisioned a major land war.

"They expected somebody to open the gate," the official said. "They didn't expect any resistance."

In an interview this month with The Post, Zelensky said that well before the invasion, Russia had been waging "a hybrid war against our state. There was an energy blow, there was a political blow."

"They wanted a change of power from inside the country," he said. "I had the feeling that [the Russians] wanted to prepare us for a soft surrender."

IV

Ukraine's SBU — like its Russian counterpart — is a direct descendant of the KGB. It occupies the former KGB headquarters in Kyiv, is organized around the same bureaucratic structure as its Soviet predecessor, and employs an undisclosed number of officers who trained at the KGB academy in Moscow or its FSB successor after the Soviet breakup.

The agencies' entangled histories bring a hall-of-mirrors aspect to the conflict.

Current and former Ukrainian security officials said fear about the loyalties of even senior personnel is a source of constant anxiety. One official said he reached for his phone on the war's second day to begin calling subordinates to relay orders. But he hesitated as he dialed, he said, worried that his calls would go unanswered or reveal that senior lieutenants had thrown their support to the Russians.

He was stunned, he said, when those he called not only answered but followed orders with a precision and determination that were rare before the conflict.

"It's a paradox of the Ukrainian state," the official said. "It was believed, including by Ukrainians themselves, that there was a high level of corruption, inefficiency and infiltration of Russian agents in the Ukrainian government structures." But after Feb. 24, he said, "they not only worked but also worked more efficiently than ever."

He and others attributed much of that resilience to the example Zelensky set with his decision to remain in the capital. His ability to do so was due in part to the existence of a massive bunker complex under Kyiv's government quarter that was designed by Soviet engineers and built to survive nuclear conflict.

A senior adviser described being taken to meet Zelensky in the first weeks of the war and descending into a disorienting warren of tunnels and command posts. "I still can't say to you where [Zelensky's base of operations] is exactly," he said, because the complex is such a labyrinth.

Ukraine has made repeated attempts to cleanse its ranks of Russian assets, at one point even enlisting a CIA officer to serve as an internal adviser on rooting out FSB penetrations, according to former U.S. officials. But with an estimated 27,000 employees — making the SBU at least five times as large as MI5, its British equivalent — the agency has struggled to surmount the problem.

“Is there treachery? What can I say?” Zelensky said. “With all my love for Ukraine, we are not without sin.” The number of those who are not loyal to their country “has fallen over the years,” he said. Still, when the war started, “there were people who were working for Russians for money, and some who from the inside always hated Ukraine and were waiting for the Soviet Union to return.”

Several senior SBU officers have been charged with treason. Among them is the former head of the agency’s directorate in Kherson, in southern Ukraine, who was accused of ordering subordinates to abandon their posts as Russian forces flooded the region.

Last month, Ukrainian authorities arrested another SBU officer, Oleg Kulinich, who had been installed in the service’s upper ranks by Bakanov, the SBU director and childhood friend of Zelensky. The allegations against Kulinich underscore the pervasiveness of Russian penetrations. Charges filed by Ukrainian authorities describe him as part of a cell of sleeper agents operated by Vladimir Sivkovich, a former deputy head of Ukraine’s security council who was placed under sanction by the U.S. Treasury Department in January for working “with a network of Russian intelligence actors to carry out influence operations.”

Two years before the war, Sivkovich “set a task for Kulinich” to begin stealing secret internal SBU files that would be “of operational interest” to the “special services of the Russian Federation,” according to the charging document.

Together, according to the document, they conspired to help promote another alleged Russian spy to take control of the SBU’s counterintelligence department. That figure, Andriy Naumov, was arrested in Serbia in June carrying cash and gems worth more than \$700,000, according to information released by Serbian authorities.

On the night before Russia’s invasion, Kulinich “deliberately” blocked the dissemination of intelligence warning that Russian forces in Crimea were hours from launching an attack, according to the Ukrainian indictment.

Zelensky’s decision to oust Bakanov as SBU director after Kulinich’s arrest was driven by exasperation with his failure to “cleanse” the agency of Russia sympathizers, said Andriy Smirnov, deputy head of Ukraine’s presidential office. “Six months into the war,” he said, “we continue to uncover loads of these people.”

Bakanov did not respond to requests for comment. Kulinich, Sivkovich and Naumov could not be reached for comment, and none appears to have made any public statement about the allegations against them.

Overall, Ukraine has detained more than 800 people suspected of aiding Russia through reconnaissance or sabotage, according to Ukraine’s Interior Ministry. Authorities have also moved against suspected “agents of influence” in government, parliament and politics.

Chief among them is Medvedchuk, the opposition party chairman who has such close ties to Putin that the Russian leader is the godfather of his youngest daughter. Ukrainian officials described Medvedchuk, 68, as a savvy political operator who harbored ambitions of high office himself and probably would have served as puppet-master to any regime installed by the Kremlin.

Zelensky’s government had charged Medvedchuk with treason in May 2021 and placed him under house arrest. Medvedchuk denied any wrongdoing and said he would fight to clear his name. He then escaped during the early days of the war, but was recaptured in April and now awaits trial. Medvedchuk’s lawyer,

Tetyana Zhukovska, declined to comment this month, saying she could not do so until a Ukrainian court ruled in the treason case against her client.

“When they began on Feb. 24, the task was to take Kyiv,” said a Ukrainian security official. “They expected it would lead to a domino effect” that would ripple across the country. “They would take first central power and then they would have strengthened presence in regions.”

As part of that plan, Ukrainian officials said, the FSB had lined up at least two pro-Russian governments-in-waiting — not just one as the British government had warned. Ukraine officials said it was unclear why Russia had mobilized two groups, though some speculated that Putin may have simply wanted options.

One, positioned in Belarus, centered on Yanukovych. On March 7, a plane that belonged to the former Ukrainian president landed in Minsk, its arrival treated as an indication that Russia might seek to reinstate a politician Kremlin officials still referred to after his 2014 ouster as the country’s “legitimate” leader.

Yanukovych then issued an open letter to Zelensky, broadcast by a Russian state news agency, in which he told the Ukrainian president it was his duty to “stop the bloodshed and reach a peace deal at any price.” Over the following week, Yanukovych’s security chief spoke three times with a senior officer from the FSB’s Ukraine unit, according to data intercepted by Ukrainian intelligence.

Yanukovych did not respond to requests for comment. His former prime minister, Nikolai Azarov, said in a telephone interview with The Post that any suggestion that Moscow was seeking to engineer Yanukovych’s return to power was “total nonsense.”

A second group, which included former members of the Yanukovych government, gathered in southeastern Ukraine as territory there fell to Russian forces. Among them was Oleg Tsaryov, a former leading member of Yanukovych’s Party of Regions, who declared his presence in Ukraine on a post to the Telegram messaging app, saying that “Kyiv will be free from fascists.”

In a telephone interview with The Post last month, Tsaryov said he had even moved into areas around Kyiv during the initial weeks of the war, traveling with “friends” he declined to identify. He wouldn’t answer questions about whether he was part of any plot to seize power, saying only that when he was outside Kyiv, “I didn’t have any agreements with anyone about a new government.”

V

Nearly every intelligence service with a stake in the war made consequential misjudgments.

U.S. spy agencies were prescient on Putin’s intentions but underestimated Ukraine’s ability to withstand the onslaught — an error that contributed to the United States’ initial hesitation to send heavy and sophisticated weapons.

Ukraine’s services appear to have read too much into signs that Russian forces were ill-prepared for full-scale combat, resisting Western warnings of an invasion that came within miles of the capital.

Russia’s intelligence breakdowns in Ukraine seem more systemic, its work marred by unreliable sources, disincentives to deliver hard truths to the Kremlin, and an endemic bias that matched Putin’s contemptuous attitude toward the country.

The FSB fueled this dynamic, officials said, with assessments packaged to please the Kremlin and with sources who had their own reasons — political and financial — for encouraging a Russian takedown of the Kyiv government.

Confidential reports by a think tank with close ties to the FSB, the Moscow-based Institute of CIS Countries, prodded Moscow to reassert control over its neighbor. An early 2021 report obtained by The

Post said that doing so was the only way to “rid Russia of the eternal threat ... posed by the puppet state ready to carry out any order of the enemy forces of the West.”

The director of the institute, Konstantin Zatulin, insisted in a telephone interview that he had opposed the use of military force against Ukraine, and blamed the Kremlin’s “inflated expectations” about what the invasion could accomplish on exaggerations by Kremlin allies in the country.

Viktor Medvedchuk, the Ukrainian oligarch and Putin friend whom Kyiv charged with treason in May 2021. (Emily Sabens/The Washington Post; Sputnik/AP; iStock)

Foremost among them was Medvedchuk, who had served as presidential chief of staff in the early 2000s before amassing a business fortune and becoming co-leader of Ukraine’s main pro-Russian party.

Unlike other Ukrainian figures, Medvedchuk was in direct contact with Putin, according to officials who cited monitored communications. His was the most prominent voice in a chorus of Kremlin allies assuring Moscow that Zelensky was weak, that his government would collapse and that Russian forces would be welcomed by the Ukrainian people, officials said.

In recent years, Medvedchuk appeared to use his business empire to lay the groundwork for a Russian move against Kyiv. His TV stations routinely bashed Zelensky and aired pro-Russian propaganda, including discredited claims that the United States had biolabs in the country to help Ukraine develop biological weapons. His companies, which included a stake in an oil refinery in southern Russia, served as a conduit for money that flowed to pro-Russian forces and backed plots to destabilize the Kyiv government, officials said.

As his activities became more brazen, the United States and Ukraine moved against his network.

The U.S. Treasury Department, which had previously placed Medvedchuk under sanction, went after key party lieutenants in January, accusing them of collaborating with Russian intelligence on efforts to “take over the Ukrainian government and control Ukraine’s critical infrastructure with an occupying force.”

One of those sanctioned associates, Oleh Voloshyn, denied that he or Medvedchuk had any specific prior knowledge of Russia’s invasion plan or that they were seeking to overthrow the Zelensky government. In a telephone interview with The Post last month, Voloshyn blamed the war on Zelensky, saying the repression of Medvedchuk and his supporters forced Moscow to defend its allies.

“The choice was always becoming neutral voluntarily, or made neutral through force,” he said. “I don’t say this is good or bad. It’s just the reality.”

Almost immediately, the war failed to live up to Medvedchuk’s forecasts. And it was his political network, rather than Zelensky’s, that ultimately folded, with as many as a dozen senior party officials leaving the country.

Moscow’s subsequent spurning of Medvedchuk has been one of the few visible signs of Putin’s pique.

After Medvedchuk was recaptured in mid-April, Ukrainian authorities proposed sending him to Moscow as part of a prisoner swap. But officials said the Kremlin has shown no interest in any deal that would free the oligarch.

Often pictured before the war wearing immaculately tailored suits in meetings with the Russian leader, recent images released by Ukraine show Medvedchuk in prison fatigues and handcuffs.

Images of Medvedchuk after his 2022 rearrest in Ukraine are seen at a Moscow news conference held by his wife to call for his release. (Emily Sabens/The Washington Post; Anadolu Agency/Getty; iStock)
To the Kremlin, “he is a traitor because he took all the money and delivered no results,” said Kostyantyn Batozsky, who was an adviser to a Donetsk governor before the region was taken over by pro-Russian separatists.

Medvedchuk “is a played card; they will never use him again,” Batozsky said. “He doesn’t want to go to Russia now because he will be asked the most unpleasant question in the world: What about the money? Where did it go?”

VI

One of the more puzzling aspects of Russia’s miscalculation is that the FSB had received information suggesting that war with Ukraine would not be a walkover.

Recent polls conducted by an organization with close ties to the FSB showed that Putin was deeply unpopular in Ukraine and that the idea that Russian forces would be welcomed was fiction, according to copies obtained by Ukrainian intelligence.

An April 2021 poll by the firm Research & Branding found that 84 percent of Ukrainians would regard any further encroachment by Russian forces as an “occupation,” with just 2 percent seeing such a scenario as a “liberation.”

A second poll, conducted in late January just weeks before the war, queried Ukrainians about invasion scenarios in extraordinary detail, according to a 26-page document reviewed by The Post. It was commissioned by and presented to Sivkovich, the former Yanukovich aide who is accused of running sleeper agents, Ukrainian officials said.

Was a “great war” between the countries possible? the poll asked. Were people “feeling concerned for themselves and their loved ones” about the buildup of Russian forces? Was Ukraine’s army capable of fending off an invasion?

The most salient question appears toward the end of the poll: “Are you ready to defend Ukraine in the event of such a necessity?” Overall, 48 percent answered in the affirmative.

Ukrainian officials said the number should have been interpreted as a sign of resolve, showing that millions of citizens were ready to take up arms against Russia. The FSB, however, may have drawn a different conclusion from the same data, believing that only a minority of Ukrainians were committed to defending their country.

It is unclear whether the results of these surveys were accurately relayed to the Kremlin.

When contacted by telephone, Eduard Zolotukhin, Research & Branding’s director, asked The Post to send written questions, but then did not respond.

VII

The fallout for the FSB has been difficult to ascertain amid the information blackout imposed on Russian media by Putin.

Early reports that Beseda, responsible for the FSB’s Ukraine directorate, had been demoted or even imprisoned are viewed skeptically by U.S. and other intelligence officials, who say they have seen no information to suggest that any of Russia’s spy chiefs has faced such consequences.

“We have pretty good reason to believe that he’s still in the job,” a senior U.S. official said of Beseda. Nor, the official said, is there any indication that FSB chief Alexander Bortnikov has been held to account for his agency’s failures. A senior Russian politician with close links to the Kremlin and to the FSB also said in an interview that Beseda was continuing to carry out his duties.

Other reports indicated that Putin had sidelined the FSB because of its failures and given greater responsibility for Ukraine to the military-linked GRU. Ukrainian officials say otherwise.

“I don’t share this view,” one official said. The FSB “didn’t manage the task they were given. But they are continuing to work. Not with the same enthusiasm. But they continue.”

Ukrainian officials cited recent intelligence indicating that the FSB — like the Russian military — has regrouped, turning its focus to territories in the south and east that have been obliterated by Russian artillery.

“We can see it playing out now in Mariupol, Melitopol, Kherson” and other cities that have fallen to Russian forces, a Ukrainian intelligence official said. FSB officials swoop in to implement a version of the blueprint the agency originally had for Kyiv.

“The aim is political control, economic control, control over criminal groups — all spheres of activity on seized territory,” the intelligence official said. “The final aim is to install a pro-Russian power.”

Kherson, the first major city to fall to the Russian army, now offers a chilling glimpse into what life might have been like if Russia had taken Ukraine’s capital.

The city’s mayor, Ihor Kolykhaiev, was arrested in June after repeatedly refusing to cooperate with the Russian occupiers, and his whereabouts are unknown, an aide to the mayor said. He has been replaced by Oleksandr Kobets, a former KGB officer who had also once worked for the SBU.

The former mayor’s aide, Galina Lyashevskaya, said that at least 300 residents were unaccounted for when Kolykhaiev was ousted from his position in April. More recent estimates are at least double that.

Many more have been arrested, she said, and about half the city’s population of 300,000 has fled. In a recent report, Human Rights Watch documented dozens of cases of torture among Kherson’s residents.

“The FSB does not have any uniform, so you never know who is standing next to you,” Lyashevskaya said. “It is paradise for the FSB here. ... They can force anyone to do what they want.”

Ukrainian officials said the FSB is involved in planning a referendum that would provide a pretext for incorporating the city and surrounding region into Russia. But Ukraine has begun staging forces for a major counteroffensive to retake Kherson.

VIII

With no end to the war in sight, FSB officials have begun operating on three-month rotations, according to Ukrainian security officials.

Kovalenko, the FSB operative who had inquired about a riverside apartment in Kyiv, retreated to Russia with a broken finger and apparent unease about Ukrainian penetrations of his directorate, according to Ukrainian security officials. In communications with relatives that were monitored by Ukrainian intelligence, he spoke about changing phones, switching addresses in Moscow and even selling family vehicles. Then, in late May, he revealed that he was being sent back to Ukraine for another assignment.

One relative responded to the news with a Russian expletive.

Ukrainian officials said they have not been able to determine Kovalenko’s current whereabouts.

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HEADLINE	08/19 Odesa, Putin’s ultimate target, is defiant
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/19/world/europe/odesa-ukraine-russia-putin.html
GIST	ODESA, Ukraine — The Odesa Fine Arts Museum, a colonnaded early-19th-century palace, stands almost empty. Early in Russia’s war on Ukraine , its staff removed more than 12,000 works for safe keeping. One

large portrait remained, depicting Catherine the Great, the Russian empress and founder of Odesa, as a just and victorious goddess.

Seen from below in Dmitry Levitzky's painting, the empress is a towering figure in a pale gown with a golden train. The ships behind her symbolize Russia's victory over the Ottoman Turks in 1792. "She's textbook Russian imperial propaganda," said Gera Grudev, a curator. "The painting's too large to move, and besides, leaving it shows the Russian occupiers we don't care."

The decision to let Catherine's portrait hang in isolation in the first room of the shuttered museum reflects a sly Odesan bravura: an empress left to contemplate how the brutality of [Vladimir V. Putin](#), the Russian president who likens himself to a latter-day czar, has alienated the largely Russian-speaking population of this Black Sea port, established by her in 1794 as Moscow's long-coveted conduit from the steppe to the Mediterranean.

Odesa, grain port to the world, city of creative mingling, scarred metropolis steeped in Jewish history, is the big prize in the war and a personal obsession for Mr. Putin. In a speech three days before ordering the Russian invasion, Mr. Putin singled out Odesa with particular venom, making clear his intention to capture "criminals" there and "bring them to justice."

Mr. Putin believed at the outset of the war that he could decapitate the Ukrainian government and take Kyiv, only to discover that Ukraine was a nation ready to fight for the nationhood he dismissed. As the focus of the fighting shifts to southern Ukraine, Mr. Putin knows that on Odesa's fate hinges Ukrainian access to the sea and, to some degree, the world's access to food. Without this city, Ukraine shrivels to a landlocked rump state.

"Odesa is the key, in my view," said François Delattre, the secretary general of the French Foreign Ministry. "Militarily, it is the highest-value target. If you control it, you control the Black Sea."

For three summer weeks, as the Russian bombardment of the broader Odesa region intensified, I listened to children's voices and the squeaking of swings in the Old Market Square. There, I contemplated the statue of a Cossack leader, an emblematic figure of tangled Ukrainian and Russian history. I lived with the blaring of sirens warning of imminent attack. I heard occasional explosions, journeyed east toward the front and pondered the fate that a fratricidal war holds for this city with a history of feast and famine.

Almost six months into the war, Odesa resists, not untouched, but unbowed. On its broad tree-lined avenues, redolent of linden blossom, where stray cats slither and a golden light bathes the gray-green, ocher and light blue buildings, a semblance of everyday life has returned. Restaurants and [the storied Opera Theater, founded in 1810](#), have reopened. People sip coffee on the elegant Derybasivska Street. Insouciance is one expression of Odesan pride.

But an insidious unease lurks beneath it. The war is close, its front line no more than 80 miles to the east. Sandbags filled from deserted city beaches and anti-tank "hedgehog" obstacles of angled metal bars form barricades on many city blocks. Night patrols enforce an 11 p.m. curfew.

"You go to sleep and you don't know if you will wake up," said Olga Tihaniy, an insurance agent.

Odesa is the crux of the war not only because it holds the key to the Black Sea but also because in it the battle between Russian and Ukrainian identity — an imperial past and a democratic future, a closed system and one connected to the world — plays out with particular intensity. This is the city, of fierce independence and stubborn inclusiveness, that symbolizes all Mr. Putin wants to annihilate in Ukraine.

Odesans look in the mirror, see a face like theirs, speaking the same Russian language, sharing much of the same history — yet the face now belongs to a stranger intent on killing them. They live in a state of shock.

“Russia is destroying its claim to be a cultural nation, and Odesa is the intercultural capital of Ukraine,” said Gennadiy Trukhanov, 57, the mayor, himself a former Russian sympathizer. “Mr. Putin has turned Russia into the nation of killing and death.”

What follows here, told through the people who make Odesa, is a story of what happens when the barbarism that frenzied autocratic Russian nationalism has unleashed meets a city forged in diversity and openness.

This should have been the place, according to Mr. Putin’s understanding of Ukraine and his plans of capture, that would roll over for him as an invading savior. Instead, it did the opposite.

Echoes of Terror

Perhaps the most famous flight of stairs in the world, the 192 granite steps and 10 landings immortalized in Sergei Eisenstein’s 1925 silent movie “Battleship Potemkin” tether Odesa on its plateau to the water below. Named the Potemkin Stairs in the Soviet era, they are now sometimes referred to by an earlier name, the Primorskiy Stairs, a sign of the ongoing battle for Odesa’s identity.

In the movie, the steps, now cordoned off for military reasons, were the scene of a brutal confrontation between Czarist troops and Odesan sympathizers with the revolutionaries on the Potemkin, who mutinied in 1905.

The implacable Cossacks firing down the steps, the crowd of every age in desperate tumbling flight, and above all a stroller propelled down the stairs by the baby’s mother as she fell to her death, have become universal symbols of the very terror now emanating from Moscow.

The steps lead up to a statue of the Duke of Richelieu, the city’s first governor, a work admired by Mark Twain when he visited in 1867 and predicted that Odesa would yet become “one of the great cities of the Old World.”

Odesa always had that potential. In the 19th century, this was the Russian Eldorado, a raucous, polyglot city on the make, populated by Greeks, Italians, Tatars, Russians, Turks and Poles. Because they were freer here than anywhere else in Russia’s Pale of Settlement, the area of the empire where they were generally confined, Jews flocked from the shtetls of Eastern Europe to this booming port. By 1900, about 138,000 of Odesa’s 403,000 inhabitants were Jewish.

The bawdy world of smugglers, gangsters, shakedown artists and fast-talkers, concentrated in the Moldovanka district, is immortalized in Isaac Babel’s classic “Odessa Stories.” Babel — born in Odesa in 1894, executed by Stalin on fabricated charges in 1940 — captured in his antihero Benya Krik, the Robin Hood “King” of the underworld, some enduring essence of Odesa’s anarchic yet generous spirit.

“Benya Krik, he got his way, because he had passion, and passion rules the world,” Babel observes.

It is this freewheeling Odesan passion Mr. Putin seeks to quash by reviving, in twisted form, the spirit of what Russia calls the Great Patriotic War of 1941 to 1945. Then, in 1944, Red Army troops liberated the city from Nazi control; now Russian troops seek to impose on Odesa a repressive autocracy as part of the campaign to “denazify” a democratic Ukraine.

This twisted nightmare takes a particular form in Odesa, because its lingua franca is still Russian and its Russian sympathies lingered long after Ukrainian independence in 1991. A hub of the “New Russia” forged in the 18th century from conquered land bordering the Black Sea, the city now finds itself in a war of disentanglement from Russia’s tenacious hold.

In the 5,000-word essay written last year that revealed the depth of his obsession with Ukraine, Mr. Putin wrote that Russia and Ukraine formed the “same historical and spiritual space” and that “Russia was robbed, indeed” by Ukrainian independence. Ukraine, in short, was a fictive nation. His response became clear on Feb. 24: the absorption by force of Ukraine into Russia.

Mr. Putin has reminded humankind that the idiom fascism knows best is untruth so grotesque it begets unreason.

It is of the nature of crazed acts to provoke the antithesis of their desired effect. As Odesa, perhaps more than any other Ukrainian city, illustrates, Mr. Putin has spread and redoubled Ukrainian national consciousness.

“There’s been a tectonic shift,” said Serhiy Dibrov, a researcher on recent Odesan history. “People crossed the line to full belief in Ukraine.” Still, he said, a substantial minority of Odesans retain some sympathy for Russia.

Lilia Leonidova, 46, and Natalia Bohachenko, 47, run Hospitable House, a center that provides help to some of the tens of thousands of displaced Ukrainians who have fled to Odesa since February. They listen to stories of rape; they see children from the devastated Kyiv suburbs of Bucha and Irpin who wet themselves when sirens sound.

Sitting in a room full of blankets, clothes, eggs, diapers and stuffed animals, Ms. Leonidova, a former schoolteacher, told me: “Russia is close but Russia is very far away now. Our differences were not so explicit before, but with independence we grew completely apart.”

“Yes,” said Ms. Bohachenko, who has volunteered to help the Ukrainian Army since Mr. Putin’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. “Russia evolves backward.”

“They want to rule as czars,” said Ms. Leonidova.

Ms. Bohachenko laughed. “It’s such a huge country and almost no opposition to Putin! How come? When we were oppressed we had the Maidan” — a reference to the 2014 uprising that led to the ouster of Viktor F. Yanukovych, the Ukrainian president who had acted as Mr. Putin’s toady. “Russians can do the same!”

Daubed on almost every building in Odesa are lines of blue and yellow paint, the national colors. Flags flutter over heavy wooden doors. A billboard proclaims, “Russian Soldier! Instead of getting flowers, you’ll get bullets here.” Another wastes no words: “1941: Fascist occupation. 2022: Russian occupation.”

An old Odesan defiance, forged in suffering, has stirred. “People can’t live without Odesa. It’s like a magnet,” said Yevgeniy Golubovskiy, 86, a writer. “I watch some of the people who left coming back, even with a curfew, and the sea closed.”

A loud explosion interrupted him. The book-lined room hung with the Odesan paintings that adorn his home shook. Mr. Golubovskiy scarcely flinched. “A few kilometers away,” he said. “I got used to it. What can we do? I am a fatalist.”

Sobs and laughter

Cherries, strawberries, cheese, sausages, tomatoes and bread adorned a table. Liudmyla Gryb has a firm family rule: no mention of Mr. Putin over a meal. Some Odesans have an app that provides a daily bulletin on whether Mr. Putin is alive or dead. Suffice to say the Russian president would not be missed.

A cousin in Russia had sent greetings for Ms. Gryb’s 71st birthday the previous day but did not want to speak in order to avoid “these discussions.” Another relative in Odesa remains fiercely pro-Russian, nostalgic for the Soviet empire.

Ms. Gryb’s husband, Andriy, cannot comprehend this. “We fought alongside Russians to defeat fascism and now they come to slaughter our grandchildren,” he said.

Everyone in Odesa, it seems, has a relative in Russia. Generally they have broken off all contact because any communication is futile. They share a language but have no shared conception of truth.

We were gathered at the house of Oleg Gryb, 47, the couple's older son, a doctor. As soon as the war broke out, he packed his wife and two children off to Switzerland, enlisted in the Territorial Defense Forces (akin to the National Guard), and put his skills as an emergency-room surgeon and anesthetist to work.

His parents and younger brother, Sergiy, a financial adviser, moved in to take care of the house and the cat. As we ate, Ms. Gryb ironed her son's military uniform with painstaking care.

"When I joined up on Feb. 27, I told my commander that I am a Christian and a doctor and I want to take people off the battlefield and save lives," Dr. Gryb, dressed in his olive-green military uniform, had told me earlier, when we met at a dismal self-serve restaurant near his base.

In his Odesan youth, he said, he had thought China might invade Russia and he would then fight to defend the brotherhood of Slavic peoples. "Fighting against fellow Orthodox Christians, that I could never imagine," he said.

Dr. Gryb's world has been upended. His private medical clinic, treating addictions and Covid, was a financial success. He had recently renovated his spacious house on a typical Odesan internal courtyard — vines grow on trellises, climbing roses crisscross walls, the scent of honeysuckle lingers, and neighbors are intimately, even critically, observed.

Dr. Gryb's son, 5, and daughter, 12, would play there. Now he misses them acutely.

"I have told my family they have to stay away for another year," Dr. Gryb said around the dinner table. "The Russians will attack. They will target Odesa ultimately. Mr. Putin wants to eradicate us."

At the start of the war the only question was how Russia would attack Odesa, not if. Would the assault come from the sea? Would paratroopers land? Dr. Gryb's unit scrambled from place to place. But Mykolaiv, an embattled city about 65 miles to the east, resisted, the Russians were pushed back at sea, and Odesa exhaled, for now.

Dr. Gryb's younger brother, Sergiy, sat listening. "The city can lull you into a dream, but it is also a nightmare because the war is right there," he said.

One day I went to the sprawling central street market with Sergiy Gryb. He was buying rabbit sausage from Tetiana Melnyk, who talked of how worried she is about Ukrainian soldiers. As she described people willing to sacrifice themselves to safeguard something they believe in, he broke into uncontrollable sobs.

Suddenly all the tension Odesa tries hard to hide was visible. It was not easy to ask Mr. Gryb why he sobbed: "It's just a Ukrainian idea of our land and our freedom, and she to me is all of that."

Then, as suddenly, he laughed. Ms. Melnyk said she had renamed a local specialty known as Moscow sausage. It was now Chornobaivka sausage — a reference to a village near Kherson where Ukraine has repeatedly inflicted heavy losses on Russia.

It's curious, Mr. Gryb mused later, how many countries overcame the disease of imperialism in the 20th century, but not Russia.

"Well, they cannot invent Microsoft or Tesla so they have to go back to history and re-fight the Great Patriotic War," his brother, Dr. Gryb, said.

Discussion turned to language. Dr. Gryb said that in his unit, "90 percent of people speak Russian, and maybe half of them can speak Ukrainian." He himself can speak Ukrainian but is more comfortable in Russian — "the language of the hymns I learned and of Soviet schooling."

His 12-year-old daughter has already taken five years of Russian. Only recently, with the onset of war, have these classes been abolished.

“The common ground is the nation, not the language,” Dr. Gryb said. “The war is not about language, it is about freedom.”

“I am a profoundly religious person,” Dr. Gryb said. “The Devil is the father of lies. Mr. Putin and all of Russia are now built on lies. The invaders are sick with his propaganda, and so the sad reality is I have to go out and shoot them.”

Andrij Sorakaletov, a Ukrainian soldier, was killed on May 27 in the Kherson region. His Russian mother, living in the Moscow suburbs, “would not accept that he was dead or that Russians could do such a thing,” said his sister-in-law, Oksana Magey, 27.

Ms. Magey fled to Odesa early in the war with her husband and two small children from Mykolaiv. She said her bereaved sister was in shock at the Russian refusal to see reality as lived in her family.

I asked Dr. Gryb when all this would end. “This will only be over when God or some cosmic force brings common sense to the Russian leadership,” he said.

A new ‘de-Judaization’?

The seamy district of Moldovanka, filled with low-slung buildings and small factories, was to the Jewish community of Odesa what the Lower East Side once was to New York’s Jews.

I went for a walk. On one street corner, under an acacia tree, sat a musician playing “Hava Nagila.” Hearing “Let’s rejoice!” in Hebrew seemed an appropriate retort to revived Russian imperialism in the form of Uran rocket and cluster munitions.

Finishing the song, the musician said that he was now going to sing in Ukrainian and in Polish and in Hebrew. He announced all this in Russian.

The flea market in Moldovanka stretched away down the cobblestone streets, filled with table after table of knickknacks, Soviet army knives and silver-plated flatware.

A 1944 Soviet bond, inscribed with the words “Death to the German Occupier,” was on sale at a modest price. One merchant swept a bank note over every object on his table. “I do that because it’s my first sale of the day and it brings luck,” he said.

Superstition, like fatalism, is big in Odesa, which has seen enough upheaval to suspect that mystical forces must be at work. Rules are not really its thing. Most of the drivers I met had a detached seatbelt tongue to insert into the buckle and so silence any beeping alarm.

The market brought to mind Babel’s stories. If Jews thrived in this freewheeling city, then they also suffered.

In 1905, a savage Russian pogrom took hundreds of Jewish lives. Babel describes it in the largely autobiographical “The Story of My Dovecote.” He had always dreamed of a dovecote. His father gives him money for three pairs of doves. No sooner has he bought them than he is attacked. “I lay on the ground, the crushed bird’s innards sliding down my temple.”

As the “tender gut” slips over his face, Babel, age 10, shuts his eyes so as not to see “the world laid bare before me. This world was small and terrible.” He walks “adorned in bloody feathers” past the window of a Jewish home being smashed. An old man lies dead. The Russians, a yard keeper observes, “they hate to forgive.”

For Mr. Putin, Ukrainian independence was ultimately unforgivable. His “denazification” has entailed the “de-Judaization” of a city with deep Jewish roots.

“My grandfather left Nuremberg for Palestine to survive the Nazis,” Rabbi Avraham Wolff said. “Now I bring Jewish children to Germany to save them from Russia! Can you believe it?”

Rabbi Wolff, then 22, came to Odesa from Israel in the early 1990s to revive Judaism in an independent post-Soviet Ukraine. As the chief rabbi of the city and of southern Ukraine, he has overseen the building of Jewish kindergartens, schools, orphanages and a university — until the unraveling of his work began this year.

Over the past five months, more than 20,000 Jews, or at least half the community, have left, many of them to Germany, Austria, Romania and Moldova. The Holocaust Museum is closed. The Jewish Museum is closed. Buses took 120 children from an orphanage to a hotel in Berlin, along with 180 mothers and children whose husbands and fathers had gone to the front. The women and children are under Rabbi Wolff’s direct care.

The rabbi is incandescent. Odesa has been the best place after Israel for a Jew to live for the past three decades! Then Mr. Putin comes along and says he wants to free me from the Nazis! He starts killing what we have accomplished! Please, Mr. Putin, don’t liberate me, just let me live!

Seated in his office at the Beit Chabad Synagogue, Rabbi Wolff noted that Russian conquest had removed Crimea in 2014 and the city of Kherson in 2022 from his authority. “Now,” he said, “I am chief rabbi of Odesa and a small part of Berlin.”

“We do not know if the Jews who left will come back,” Rabbi Wolff said. “I suspect that if the war continues until Sept. 1 and children start school wherever they are, they will never return.”

This, he says, would be a disaster, a victory for Mr. Putin’s nationalism, and so the rabbi stays on with his wife and hopes his example will inspire others.

Mr. Grudev, the art curator, who is Jewish, now lives in his mother’s apartment. She left for Italy at the start of the war. He moved in to look after her dog, and brought his cat. His partner, Bogdan Zinchenko, moved in with him.

They bought plane tickets to leave for Israel, where Mr. Grudev’s sister lives, on March 7, but never used them. He could not bear to leave his books or paintings. Now when sirens blare, the couple takes refuge in the bathroom.

The laundry hanging on a wrought-iron balcony opposite his mother’s apartment drove Mr. Grudev crazy. At one point he calculated that the pink shirt that caught his eye had been drying for 112 days. Before his epiphany: The laundry had been deliberately left to give the impression the apartment was still occupied and so deter thieves.

This, he reckoned, was a very Odesan ruse; laundry as protection.

Mr. Grudev, a stud in each ear, smiles. Humor is also a survival mechanism. An old joke, in a city famed for them, tells of a barber who insists on talking politics in time of Stalin’s terror. Exasperated, his client asks why. “Because your hair is easier to cut when it stands on end.”

“Putin wants to save me — a gay, Jewish, Russian-speaking man living in Odesa — from Nazis!” Mr. Grudev says. “Please.”

Roman Shvartsman, 85, is an Odesan Holocaust survivor. He lost his childhood, lived the antisemitism of the Soviet years, and had hoped for a quiet old age. Now he fears for his grandchildren.

In his pale blue eyes, one reddened by recent cataract surgery, was all of Babel's terrible world and all of humanity's defiant hope. "Putin says openly that there is no such state as Ukraine and that he wants to annihilate 40 million Ukrainians. How much clearer does the West need him to be?"

Shifting identities

One night, I joined a patrol composed of volunteers and police officers who enforce the 11 p.m. curfew. Closing down at that hour has not been an easy adjustment for a city notorious for its nightlife, particularly in the gaudy Arcadia district.

Nikolay Iljin, a grain broker, drove. His business has collapsed as a result of the Russian blockade, now eased under a deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations.

"You want to know the Russian principle on grain?" he said. "If you can steal it, steal it. If you can't, destroy it."

Mr. Iljin was with a bunch of hunting buddies. They had brought their shotguns. Giving this time is their form of service. In some ways Odesa is like a city-state in the fierce allegiance it inspires.

The car screeched to a halt. Two startled young men raised their hands. They showed their military IDs. Dmitriy, 20, military call sign "Skin," and Dmitriy, 19, call sign "Ryzhyi," said they were on leave from their unit in Mykolaiv, where the bombardment of Russian rockets is unrelenting. Each hastily married his girlfriend when they enlisted.

"This is what Ukrainian young men do now," Mr. Iljin said. "Marry and go to die."

We proceeded down the wide boulevards with their electric tramlines first built by a Belgian company in 1910. Pointing to an elderly woman, and using a Russian term for her, Mr. Iljin said: "See that babushka, let's make an exception for her."

"She's probably a K.G.B. agent," said one of his friends, laughing, as she was left to go on her way with her bundles.

No Odesan laughter is without its measure of tension. All over the city, people volunteer. Oleksandra Savytska, 48, a teacher of autistic children, has joined a basic military training course offered by one of the city's universities.

Why? "Because anything could happen and I want to be useful," she said. An instructor barked orders. "Thumb on the safety catch as you walk, so you can release immediately if something happens!"

I asked Ms. Savytska, whose two children are in their 20s, if she was ready to kill for her country. "Kill someone? Maybe 30 percent there, but generally I am ready."

She gazed at her weapon. "It's strange to hold a gun," she told me. "Hard, heavy, interesting."

Ukraine, discovered

Odesa has always been a city of flux, of comings and goings, of mass immigration and mass emigration. If there is a Little Odessa in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, it's for a reason. Its spirit has always been free: Lenin and Stalin never set foot here; nor has Mr. Putin.

"Odesa is a nationality," said Mr. Golubovskiy, the writer who was unperturbed by an explosion.

Pushkinska Street was named for the Russian author Pushkin, who lived there for about a year from July 1823 while writing part of his masterpiece "Eugene Onegin." It was previously Italiyanskaya Street, or Italian Street, in honor of the large community of Italian traders lured, like Greeks, by Odesa's promise.

Another name change for the street may be coming as a de-Russification campaign gathers pace. Petro Obukhov, a local politician, has drawn up a list of about 200 Russian street names that will be reviewed by city authorities. If Moscow “wants to erase the name Ukraine,” he believes, Odesa needs to efface most traces of Russia.

Just about every postwar Odesa building constructed under Stalin has a nuclear bomb shelter. They are now being revived as protection against Mr. Putin, who draws some inspiration from Stalin. Mykola Chepelev, an architect, took me to one with a bed and even a carpet. “The metal door weighs over 4,000 pounds,” he said.

The gyre of history keeps changing this city that conceals itself from outside powers and so arouses suspicion. Its independence always went with a certain conceit. Odesa stood alone.

An old joke tells of a man in a well-cut suit who is asked where he found it. “Paris,” he says. And how far is that from Odesa? “Oh, about 1,300 miles.” The Odesan is astonished: “So far from here, and they know how to sew so well!”

But Odesa stands less alone now.

East of Odesa, I saw the devastation in Mykolaiv. Residential buildings reduced by Russian missiles to twisted wreckage; a red dustpan propped against an icon in a kitchen full of shattered glass; lives blotted out under concrete slabs, as if they were no more than flies Mr. Putin chose to swat.

Vlad Sorokin, 21, a port worker from Odesa, clung to life in a hospital, his lungs and liver torn, ribs and hip broken by shrapnel from a cruise missile. “Russians think it’s normal to attack others,” he said.

“The people of Mykolaiv are our defenders,” said Oksana Dovgoplova, who works on the subject of collective memory in Odesa University’s philosophy department. “It used to be some small city near Odesa. Now we see it as a heroic city, no longer inferior. Every day we send it food, medicine, weapons.”

More Ukrainian, less Russian, Odesa suddenly sees the embattled country it is part of.

Eight years ago, on May 2, 2014, the city split, with street fighting between armed Russian sympathizers and pro-Maidan democracy supporters. “It was a battle between those who still wanted to live in a nonexistent Soviet Union, or in an existent, modern, European Ukraine,” said Mr. Dibrov, the researcher, who worked on a documentary about the violence.

In a city of traders more than fighters, the battle was a violation of Odesa’s conciliatory principles. It posed a fundamental question: Are you ready to fight for Ukraine or for Russia? In Mr. Dibrov’s words, “It was the moment people realized how dangerous Russia could be.”

After the pro-Russian demonstrators initiated the violence by killing two pro-Maidan activists, they lost four of their own, before holing up in the Trade Union Building. A fire broke out, its exact origin unclear, killing 42 pro-Moscow Odesans.

It is an episode Mr. Putin has never forgotten.

“One thing is clear,” Mr. Dibrov said. “It was the first day of war in Odesa.”

Homo Sovieticus

From the hospital in Mykolaiv, where I met Mr. Sorokin, I went to that city’s Black Sea Shipyard. It was there, over decades, that the Soviet Union built the submarines and aircraft carriers projecting its global might. There, the command economy of a sprawling Communist state heaved itself into military competitiveness with the United States.

Today it is in part an immense graveyard of Soviet shipbuilding and five-year plans. Stray dogs wander across a disused dry dock and sniff at piles of rusted metal.

Mr. Putin has called the collapse of the Soviet Union “the greatest geopolitical catastrophe” of the 20th century. For a hundred million central Europeans liberated from Soviet totalitarianism, it was anything but that.

Still, at the shipyard, it was hard not to feel the immensity of the dissolution a little more than three decades earlier of the Soviet empire, from which an independent Ukraine emerged. This was an event akin in its scale and reverberations to the French Revolution.

Decades of turmoil followed the storming of the Bastille in 1789. Within 15 years, revolutionary France had an emperor, Napoleon. Russia, in Mr. Putin, has a leader resembling an emperor, a man obsessed by all that was lost in 1991, consumed by the “ancien régime” of Russia, and intent on recovering it by force.

Here lie the roots of the war. “The past is never dead,” said William Faulkner. “It’s not even past.”

Andriy Checheta, 57, is haunted by the past. He lives in Odesa and drives out every day, past golden wheat fields to his 5,000-acre farm where he grows sunflowers, wheat, corn and barley. Born in Grozny to a Chechen father and Ukrainian mother, Mr. Checheta worked all over the former Soviet Union.

“Nothing changed for me with the collapse of the Soviet Union,” he said. “I feel it as my common space as acutely as ever.” He looked at me intently. “How would the United States feel if Texas broke off?”

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, trees were felled for energy and water became polluted. Weeds were everywhere when Mr. Checheta first bought land in 2002.

“And, now, again, we have a catastrophe for agriculture in general!” he said, springing up from his desk. He grabbed a bottle of antiseptic soap and inverted it. “Imagine if you had a 20 liter canister attached to this same narrow neck. That’s where we are.”

Because of the war, Mr. Checheta’s entire wheat harvest is wrapped in huge white plastic cylindrical containers out in the fields. He has been unable to move them.

Despite the July deal that has seen a few ships loaded with grain sail from Odesa and other ports, Mr. Checheta said in a later telephone conversation that he “will not be able to sell anything until November and that is an optimistic forecast.”

Whom, I asked when I met him, does he blame? “When couples split, both are responsible,” Mr. Checheta said. “The West provoked instability.” His view of Odesa: “Administratively it is a Ukrainian town, historically it is not.”

I encountered such views more than once — a nostalgia for the Soviet Union, skepticism over Ukrainian statehood, anger at the West for fomenting trouble. Aleksandr Prigarin, an anthropologist at Mechnikov University in Odesa, told me the main thing he was concerned with protecting right now was “Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Tchaikovsky and Chekhov.”

Nobody on either side of the arguments believes the shooting will stop any time soon. “Only a complete idiot can be happy with war,” said Mr. Checheta, gazing at his fields. “Russia and Ukraine must negotiate soon or there will be a total disaster.”

One evening, on the eastern outskirts of Odesa, I saw two soldiers in the twilight digging trenches in the rich soil of Europe. It was a timeless image, with its own strange beauty, of the repetitive failure from which the continent believed itself delivered.

The Naked Sentry

One other work remains in the Fine Arts Museum, Maria Kulikovska's "Venus," a naked woman modeled on the artist's own body and cast in 2019 from ballistic soap with infused flowers. It was too delicate to move.

Ballistic soap is used by the arms industry to test the damage projectiles will inflict on a body, how big the hole is at the entry point and what direction sundering will take. "It has a similar consistency to the human body," Ms. Kulikovska told me.

The extraordinary statue stands alone now in the museum's central baroque room, under a chandelier, beneath the decorative cherubs. It seems intensely human and vulnerable, everything Catherine the Great in her portrait is not.

Ms. Kulikovska, 34, is from Kerch, an ancient city in Crimea perched on the meeting point of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. She was last there in 2013, the year before Russia's annexation. "Now," she said, "the place I am from does not exist, it's just gray, an occupied territory not there on maps, the home to which I cannot send a postcard or money to my grandma."

At the time she made "Venus," she said, she was missing her home very much. Odesa, with its colors, its sea, its architecture, reminded her of Kerch. "That's why I put all these flowers under the skin, as a reminder of the fragility of human life. Yet I am alive, even if there is pain inside."

When fighting broke out in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine in 2014, Ms. Kulikovska had three figures cast from her body, in pink, green and white, but without flowers, on show at the Izolyatsia arts center in Donetsk.

"The Russian separatist terrorists made them a target, fired volleys of bullets into them, and destroyed them," she said. "I was denounced as a degenerate artist, presenting a forbidden and disgusting naked female body."

The arts center was turned into a prison. People were tortured in the garden where the statues had stood, in the name of Mr. Putin's vision of a restored Russian imperium.

I asked Ms. Kulikovska about her figure standing alone in Odesa's Fine Arts Museum.

"There is something beautiful about it," she said. "This Russian propaganda facing my simple naked body, mine, standing up against this aggression."

She paused for a moment. "It is like a female guard that protects my people, in Odesa and beyond, waiting at the gate of Crimea to go back home."

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HEADLINE	08/18 Polio almost eradicated stages a comeback
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/18/health/polio-new-york-malawi.html
GIST	<p>At the beginning of this year, there was a thrum of excitement among global health experts: Eradication of polio, a centuries-old foe that has paralyzed legions of children around the globe, seemed tantalizingly close.</p> <p>Pakistan, one of only two countries where wild poliovirus still circulates, had not recorded cases in more than a year. Afghanistan had reported only four.</p> <p>But eradication is an uncompromising goal. The virus must disappear from every part of the world and stay gone, regardless of wars, political disinterest, funding gaps or conspiracy theories. New signs of the virus in a single country can derail the effort.</p> <p>In polio's case, there were several ominous setbacks.</p>

Malawi in February announced its first case in 30 years, a 3-year-old girl who became paralyzed following infection with a virus that appeared to be from Pakistan. Pakistan itself went on to report 14 cases, eight of them in a single month this spring.

In March, Israel reported its first case since 1988. Then, in June, British authorities declared an “incident of national concern” when they discovered the virus in sewage. By the time New York City detected the virus in wastewater last week, polio eradication seemed as elusive as ever.

“It’s a poignant and stark reminder that polio-free countries are not really polio-risk free,” said Dr. Ananda Bandyopadhyay, deputy director for polio at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the largest supporter of polio eradication efforts.

The virus is always “a plane ride away,” he added.

Polio is a highly contagious and sometimes deadly enemy, capable of ravaging the nervous system and causing paralysis within hours. Those who recover could relapse and become seriously ill years later.

The virus multiplies in the intestine for weeks and could spread through feces or contaminated food or water — for example, when an infected child uses the toilet, neglects washing hands and then touches food.

For decades the virus terrorized families, causing paralysis among more than 15,000 American children each year and hundreds of thousands more worldwide. Its retreat is a triumph of vaccination. After the first vaccine arrived in 1955, the number of cases dropped precipitously, and by 1979 the United States was declared polio-free.

Although the United States and Britain have high immunization rates, they also have pockets of low immunity that allow the virus to flourish. In those communities, all unvaccinated people — not just children — are at risk. If polio continues to spread in the United States for a year, the country may lose its polio-free status under W.H.O. guidelines.

The Covid-19 pandemic left many other countries vulnerable to a resurgence of polio: It disrupted vaccination drives for months and diverted staff and resources away from prevention programs, resulting in the worst backslide in immunization rates in 30 years.

“The moment you take your eye off the ball, you know that the virus will simply reappear,” said Aidan O’Leary, director for polio eradication at the World Health Organization. “We have to literally face down every single chain of transmission that we can identify.”

Aid organizations first aspired to eradicate polio in 1988 and poured billions of dollars into the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#), a consortium of six partners, including the Gates Foundation, the W.H.O. and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Despite the recent cases, the progress is unmistakable: Global cases of polio have fallen by 99 percent — from 350,000 cases of paralysis in 1988 to about 240 so far this year.

That success “is both a miraculous thing and a thing that’s taken way, way longer than people expected,” said Bill Gates, who has taken a pointed interest in polio, in an interview in February. “Eradications are super hard, and they rarely should be undertaken.”

Ending polio has been particularly challenging.

There are three strains of the wild poliovirus. Type 2 was declared eradicated in 2015, and [Type 3 in 2019](#). Only Type 1 poliovirus remains at large, and only in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Until recently, there was good reason to be optimistic about Type 1's demise. India and Nigeria were both considered impossible targets for polio elimination, but both achieved that goal.

"There were so many people who kept telling us you will never succeed in India," said Dr. Hamid Jafari, W.H.O.'s director of polio eradication for the eastern Mediterranean region.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have proven more difficult because of their nomadic populations, rough terrain and the baseless notion that the vaccine is a Western tool for sterilizing the population, Dr. Jafari said.

In Afghanistan, polio thrived in areas where immunization bans were imposed by the Taliban. In late March, the Taliban allowed vaccinations to resume, but the doses are administered in door-to-door campaigns, often by female health care workers. Some have been [assaulted](#) and [killed](#).

Only one human viral disease, smallpox, has ever been eradicated. For all its deadliness, smallpox was relatively simple to dispatch because every infection resulted in dramatic, unmistakable symptoms.

Polio is much more sly: It can spread silently, causing mild flulike symptoms or none at all, and yet the disease paralyzes one of every 200 infected children. Even one case of paralysis is a signal that there may be hundreds or even thousands of undetected infections.

"Paralysis is the tip of the iceberg," said Dr. Walter Orenstein, associate director of the Emory Vaccine Center and a former director of the United States' Immunization Program.

But in some countries, polio has become such a dim and distant threat that health officials have stopped looking for it. While Britain and Israel monitor sewage for the virus — ideal because polio spreads through fecal matter — many others, including those in the United States, have ceased active surveillance.

"There's no doubt that there are places where it needs to be reinforced," said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, W.H.O.'s regional director for Africa.

The single case imported into Malawi from Pakistan resulted in mass immunizations of nearly 28 million children in Malawi and its neighbors. But health care workers had become unaccustomed to door-to-door campaigns.

In the Chikwawa district in southern Malawi in March, Charles Bizimaki woke at 5 a.m., took the lunch his wife had packed for him and walked several kilometers to a nearby village. Mr. Bizimaki has been the vaccine manager for six villages since 2007.

But he had not conducted a door-to-door vaccination campaign since a tetanus outbreak in 2013 and had never led one for polio.

The campaign was physically exhausting and frustrating because it sometimes took multiple visits before he could find a child at home. "It was not an easy job," Mr. Bizimaki said. It took him six days to vaccinate every child under 5 in the nearby villages.

Immunization for polio can be done in one of two ways. The injected vaccine used in the United States and most rich countries contains killed virus, is powerfully protective against illness but doesn't prevent the vaccinated from spreading the virus to others.

Mass vaccination campaigns rely on the oral polio vaccine, which delivers weakened virus in just a few drops on the tongue. The oral vaccine is inexpensive, easy to administer and can prevent infected people from spreading the virus to others, a method better suited to extinguishing outbreaks.

But it has one paradoxical flaw: Vaccinated children can shed the weakened virus in feces, and from there it can sometimes find its way back into people, occasionally setting off a chain of infections in communities with low immunization rates.

If the weakened virus circulates for long enough, it can slowly mutate back into a more virulent form that can cause paralysis.

Even as wild poliovirus has been on the decline, so-called vaccine-derived polio has been on the upswing. Cases tripled between 2018 and 2019, and again between 2019 and 2020. Between January 2020 and April 2022, 33 countries reported a total of [nearly 1,900 cases of paralysis](#) from vaccine-derived polio.

The samples found in London sewage, in Israel and in New York are all vaccine-derived virus. They carry the same genetic fingerprint, suggesting that the virus may have been [circulating undetected for about a year](#) somewhere in the world.

Eradicating polio would require wiping out the vaccine-derived type, not just the few remaining hot spots of wild virus. “We definitely need to stop all polio transmission, whether wild poliovirus or whether circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus,” said John Vertefeuille, who heads polio eradication at the C.D.C.

Vaccine-derived polio has become more prevalent because the oral vaccine in use now protects against only Types 1 and 3 of the virus. In 2016, buoyed by the seeming eradication of Type 2 virus, the W.H.O. withdrew it from the oral vaccine. That move left the world [increasingly vulnerable](#) to outbreaks of residual Type 2 virus.

At the same time, global health organizations shifted away from maintaining nimble teams that can swiftly stamp out outbreaks to strengthening health care systems overall. Regions that struggle to contain polio tend to have other public health problems, such as poor nutrition, access to safe drinking water and other infectious disease outbreaks.

But the response to an outbreak of polio — or to other infectious diseases like Covid-19 or monkeypox — requires dedicated teams and programs, said Kimberly M. Thompson, a health care economist whose work focuses on polio eradication.

The W.H.O. has not delivered on that goal for decades, “but there is no accountability for performance,” Dr. Thompson said. Likewise, countries that receive funding for polio are rarely held responsible for diverting the money to other programs, she added.

As a result of the dismantling of outbreak teams, the response to vaccine-derived polio has often been sluggish and inefficient.

“The speed and the quality of the responses will have to go up in order for us to stop these outbreaks,” Dr. Vertefeuille said.

In November 2019, the W.H.O. granted an emergency use authorization for a novel oral vaccine that is specific to the Type 2 virus. The vaccine, which took a decade to develop, is more genetically stable than the widely used oral vaccine and less likely to revert to a form that can cause paralysis.

The eventual goal for polio eradication is to immunize children in every country with the injected vaccine used in the United States, said Jalaa’ Abdelwahab, director of vaccine programs at Gavi, which helps increase immunizations in poor countries. Supplies of oral vaccine would be stockpiled only to respond to unexpected outbreaks, Mr. Abdelwahab said.

The recent cases have forced a reassessment of the strategies being used to detect and contain polio. The C.D.C. is planning to introduce wastewater surveillance at strategic sites in the country, according to a statement from the agency.

Pakistan has among the largest wastewater surveillance systems for polio, but vaccine hesitancy is rampant. One team of scientists, led by Dr. Jai Das at Aga Khan University in Karachi, has found that

	<p>offering communities an incentive — installing water pumps, for example — if they raise vaccination rates may be more effective than unconditional cash prizes for individuals.</p> <p>Eradicating polio by 2026, the current goal, will require innovative strategies, patience and persistence — and an estimated \$4.8 billion.</p> <p>“That last mile, those last cases, are always the hardest,” said Simon Bland, chief executive officer of the Global Institute for Disease Elimination.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Racial disparities in monkeypox response
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/18/nyregion/monkeypox-vaccine-racial-disparities.html
GIST	<p>New York City released new data on Thursday showing stark disparities in monkeypox vaccine access, with Black men receiving the vaccine at a much lower rate than members of other racial groups.</p> <p>White New Yorkers represent about 45 percent of people at heightened risk of monkeypox infection, and received 46 percent of vaccine doses. Black New Yorkers, who make up 31 percent of the at-risk population, received only 12 percent of doses administered so far, according to data from the city’s Health Department.</p> <p>Hispanic residents were overrepresented among vaccine recipients. They made up 16 percent of the at-risk population, but received 23 percent of shots. Hispanic men so far represent the largest share of monkeypox patients.</p> <p>Racial and ethnic imbalances in vaccine distribution are also happening elsewhere, as a highly limited supply of monkeypox vaccine has often gone first to those with better access to the health care system and more time to figure out when doses will be released. There are also concerns among advocates that a new method of administering the vaccines favored by the federal government, which uses only a fraction of the current dose, may inadvertently deepen disparities.</p> <p>New York City has vaccinated more people for monkeypox so far than any other jurisdiction. Some 64,000 of the roughly 130,000 people whom it deems most at risk have gotten the first of two doses. New York City estimates that there are about 134,000 people — primarily men who have sex with men — who are at heightened risk of infection, based on a 2020 city health survey.</p> <p>The racial disparities have left public health experts and activists frustrated that lessons from the Covid-19 response remain unlearned. Black and Hispanic New Yorkers were far more likely than white New Yorkers to be infected with Covid, and to be hospitalized and die during the deadly first wave in the spring of 2020. They were also less likely to receive vaccinations early on, and less likely to receive early treatments, such as monoclonal antibodies.</p> <p>Public health experts and activists were particularly dismayed that appointments for the monkeypox vaccine had been doled out largely on a first-come, first-serve basis, just as they were in an early phase of the Covid vaccine drive. Public health experts say that has meant that vaccine recipients have tended to be whiter and wealthier than other eligible New Yorkers because they are more likely to have flexible schedules, enabling them to spend the hours it can take to find a vaccine appointment.</p> <p>“We went back to vaccine cattle calls — everyone come — even though we know that if we do broad-based, top-down, no-nuance messaging, it is not going to reach everyone who needs it,” said Matthew Rose, a Black H.I.V. and social justice activist. “This was a foreseeable problem. We ran the same play we have run every other time before.”</p> <p>In New York City, the first batch of vaccines were given with little advance notice, midday on a Thursday, at a sexual health clinic in Chelsea, Manhattan, to a mostly white crowd. Later vaccine offerings relied on a glitchy internet appointment system.</p>

A clinic was set up in Harlem, but those who came appeared to be mostly white and lived elsewhere. Neighborhood residents weren't able to walk in and get shots, a decision that came under deep criticism from community members who felt excluded. Some Black men have said the city didn't do enough to warn them about the disease or how to protect themselves.

"I think the information should've been promoted a lot more about monkeypox vaccines amongst not only the L.G.B.T. community, but for us Black and brown people as well," said Dominic Faison, 35, a Bronx resident who got monkeypox in early July before even hearing about the vaccine.

In recent weeks, the city health department has shifted tactics, giving priority to high-risk patients and providing batches of doses directly to community health organizations. But the effort has yet to fully correct the imbalance. The vaccine is called Jynneos and is administered in a two-dose course.

"Black men in particular are underrepresented in our vaccination effort compared to their risk," said Dr. Ashwin Vasani, the city health commissioner, in a Thursday interview.

"I do think that we have work to do to advance equity," Dr. Vasani added. "And there are sometimes trade offs in terms of speed and our ability to go deep, build relationships, work with trusted partners, and get the folks who need it most access to immunization."

There are signs that the spread of monkeypox is slowing in New York City. After increasing steeply for two months, monkeypox cases plateaued at between 60 and 70 new cases per day by late July. More recently, they have declined to an average of 54 cases per day, according to [city data](#).

City health officials remain concerned that many cases are not being reported, particularly those in communities of color with less access to health care. The city said Thursday it planned to award \$5 million in grants to community organizations in low-income neighborhoods to help promote vaccination efforts.

As of Wednesday, New York City had about 2,500 of the nation's 13,000 monkeypox cases, according to federal data — about 20 percent of the nation's cases.

While few jurisdictions have released racial data about recipients, the ones that have revealed worrying trends.

In North Carolina, for example, 70 percent of monkeypox cases have been in Black men and 19 percent in white men, but 24 percent of vaccines have gone to Black recipients, and 67 percent to white recipients, according to an Aug. 10 report from the North Carolina Department of Health. (Because the virus has been predominately spreading through networks of men who have sex with men, the focus of vaccination campaigns nationally has been on that demographic.)

Similar trends are appearing nationally in who has access to the antiviral medication TPOXX, which is effective at treating monkeypox: Black people accounted for just 17 percent of the 233 patients who received the treatment as of July 22, though they made up 26 percent of the total number of patients at that point, according to the C.D.C.

TPOXX is not particularly scarce — the federal government has a stockpile of more than 1.7 million courses — but there are barriers to accessing it, including cumbersome paperwork.

Doses of Jynneos, the vaccine, have been scarce since the beginning of the outbreak, partly due to federal missteps. To stretch the supply further, the federal government recently approved a new way of administering the vaccine, which allows providers to use only one-fifth of the current dosage. The vaccine may now be administered intradermally, or between layers of skin, rather than in the fat layer under the skin.

The strategy allows federal officials to assert that they have solved the supply problem and now have enough vaccine to cover all 1.6 million people that they believe are most at risk.

But some advocates in the gay community are concerned that the new dosing strategy may compound the equity problem rather than solve it.

Intradermal vaccines can be safe and effective. But just one study has examined the safety and efficacy of administering the Jynneos vaccine intradermally. The manufacturer did not note significant safety concerns or a decrease in efficacy, but there was a greater chance of side effects at the site of the injection, such as redness, swelling and firmness.

Switching over to fractional doses also requires training. Most providers do not have extensive experience giving shots just under the skin. If given too deeply, the fractional dose will not be as effective. The need for training may also limit how many small community clinics that reach marginalized groups are able to offer it.

Dr. Vasan, the city health commissioner, said that while New York and other localities are feeling pressure from the federal government to switch over quickly to the new method, the city planned to implement the change gradually. The pressure intensified Thursday, as the White House announced that the next phase of vaccine distribution of 1.8 million doses — calculated by multiplying 360,000 full doses by five — will only be distributed to jurisdictions adopting the new approach.

“I think every jurisdiction is feeling like this is a fast switch,” he said. “We need the time to do this right. The last thing I want to do is roll something out that isn’t well accepted by the community.”

Some gay rights advocates have been speaking with city and state health officials about a hybrid plan: All recipients would get a full dose for their first vaccine shot, and everyone would get the fractional injection for their second dose, to ensure equity.

City and state officials, they said, appeared receptive to the idea, which could also allow doctors to collect data on side effects and effectiveness during a pilot stage. Dr. Vasan said that all options remained on the table.

Joseph Osmundson, a virologist at New York University, said he was concerned that the federal government’s approach would push jurisdictions to move to the new method rapidly even if they have concerns. Health advocates said it might also be hard to sell Black men in particular on the new approach, which could feed into skepticism that they are being treated as less-than.

As the city saw during the Covid vaccine campaign, many Black New Yorkers mistrust the government and medical establishment’s assurances because of a long history of racism in medicine, as well as past medical experimentation on Black people.

“So now that a critical mass of white gay men in the biggest U.S. cities have been able to get a whole dose, they just got to do — whatever — to us,” said Kenyon Farrow, the managing director of advocacy at PrEP4All, an H.I.V. advocacy group, describing the sentiment he has heard from fellow Black gay men on social media.

“If that becomes in any way a sizable amount of people feeling that way,” he said, “then you actually undermine the whole point of having to shift to this strategy to begin with.”

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HEADLINE	08/18 America’s pandemic failures
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/18/briefing/monkeypox-cdc-walensky-covid.html
GIST	The U.S. seemed ready for the monkeypox outbreak. It had vaccines and treatments that are effective and experts had studied the virus for decades.

Yet the U.S. response has fallen short. The country [cannot use](#) millions of vaccine doses it owns because they were not bottled for distribution. The available [vaccines](#) and [medications](#) remain out of reach for a vast majority of Americans — a result of poor communication by federal officials and of other bureaucratic barriers.

Monkeypox is not very deadly, so this is not a Covid-level catastrophe. But the flawed response suggests that, nearly three years after Covid first appeared, the U.S. is still unprepared for the next deadly pandemic.

The C.D.C. director, Rochelle Walensky, acknowledged that much yesterday. She [called for](#) her agency to be overhauled after an external review found it had failed to respond quickly and clearly to Covid. She faulted the agency for acting too much like an academic institution that was focused on producing “data for publication” instead of “data for action.”

“For 75 years, C.D.C. and public health have been preparing for Covid-19, and in our big moment, our performance did not reliably meet expectations,” Walensky said.

In today’s newsletter, I want to explain three vulnerabilities that Covid, and now monkeypox, exposed: unclear communication, a fragmented public health system and a tendency for public officials to be reactive instead of proactive.

Unclear communication

During the early days of the Covid pandemic, a lot of criticism focused on Donald Trump. He downplayed the threat, pushed the U.S. to reopen quickly after an initial lockdown and made outright false statements about treatments.

Trump’s poor performance sometimes made it seem as if he was the sole reason the U.S. had struggled more than other countries in combating Covid. But he wasn’t; the broader public health system struggled, too. For its part, the C.D.C. said yesterday that its public guidance on Covid was “confusing and overwhelming.”

One memorable example was officials’ initial, monthslong refusal to recommend that the public wear masks — not because they thought masks were ineffective, but because they worried that public demand would cause a shortage of masks for health care workers.

Their hesitation represented what would become a pattern throughout the pandemic: a reluctance to communicate the truth clearly and directly. The resulting lack of clarity made it harder for Americans to act on expert advice. But it also damaged public trust, when people eventually found out they had been deceived.

Similar problems have emerged with monkeypox. Some public health officials have been reluctant to acknowledge that the virus is mostly spreading among gay and bisexual men, out of fear of stigmatizing this group. But about 95 percent of known U.S. cases are among men who have sex with men (not all of whom identify as gay or bisexual). Failing to acknowledge that makes it harder to target and advise the most at-risk group. (I went into [more detail in a previous newsletter](#) about who should take precautions and why.)

Effective public health messaging needs to be honest, said Ellen Carlin, a health security policy expert at Georgetown University. If officials do not trust the public with the truth, then the public will eventually stop trusting officials, too.

Fragmented systems

Another problem that made the U.S.’s Covid and monkeypox responses less effective: The American public health system is divided — among the federal government, 50 states, thousands of local governments and many more private organizations and workers both inside and outside the health care system.

We saw the results when the U.S. first started distributing Covid vaccines. Poor planning and communication between the layers of government, along with limited supply, made it harder for front-line officials to plan for how many shots they could get in arms. Similar problems have appeared with monkeypox vaccine distribution.

The C.D.C. is a key federal agency that is supposed to rise above this fragmentation and help coordinate the national response to disease outbreaks. But throughout the pandemic, as Walensky acknowledged, it has struggled. And it seems to be struggling with monkeypox, too.

Reactive, not proactive

Many of these problems could have been avoided with better pandemic preparedness. The federal government could have, for example, bulked up mask stockpiles or manufacturing before the pandemic, easing early concerns about shortages.

But the U.S. has underfunded public health for years, experts said. So when Covid first began to spread, officials suddenly had to shift limited resources to deal with a crisis that had caught them by surprise — making mistakes more likely. In the early days of the pandemic, experts often said that the plane was being built as it was being flown.

Covid has worsened the problem. “Health departments have lost a lot of staff and have been very burned out,” said Caitlin Rivers, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. “There’s just not a lot left to bring resources to their full potential.”

To address the gaps, the Biden administration has called for tens of billions more in funding for pandemic preparedness. Congress [has so far ignored](#) those proposals, in what seems like history repeating itself.

The bottom line

Nearly three years into Covid, the U.S. is still not ready for the next pandemic. The C.D.C. is moving to remedy some of the problems plaguing the country’s public health system. Those changes, along with the broader lessons from Covid and monkeypox, could be the difference between another deadly pandemic and a crisis averted.

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HEADLINE	08/18 NKorea dismisses Seoul ‘foolish’ aid offer
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/18/north-korea-dismisses-seouls-aid-offer-as-foolish/
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said her country will never accept South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol’s “foolish” offer of economic benefits in exchange for denuclearization steps, accusing Seoul of recycling proposals Pyongyang already rejected.</p> <p>In a commentary published by state media Friday, Kim Yo-jong stressed that her country has no intentions to give away its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles program for economic cooperation, saying “no one barter its destiny for corn cake.”</p> <p>She questioned the sincerity of South Korea’s calls for improved bilateral relations while it continues its combined military exercises with the United States and fails to stop civilian activists from flying anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets and other “dirty waste” across their border.</p> <p>She also ridiculed South Korea’s military capabilities, saying the South misread the launch site of the North’s latest missile tests on Wednesday, hours before Yoon used a news conference to urge Pyongyang to return to diplomacy.</p> <p>“It would have been more favorable for his image to shut his mouth, rather than talking nonsense as he had nothing better to say,” she said about Yoon.</p>

South Korea's Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, expressed "strong regret" over Kim Yo Jong's comments, and Yoon's office called for Pyongyang to show "self-restraint" and "think deeply" about Seoul's offer.

"This attitude from North Korea will not only threaten peace on the Korean Peninsula but result in further difficulties for the North by worsening its international isolation and economic situation," Lee Hyo-jung, a Unification Ministry spokesperson, said during a briefing.

Kim Yo-jong last week had threatened "deadly" retaliation against the South over the COVID-19 outbreak in the North, which it dubiously claims was caused by leaflets and other objects dropped from balloons launched by southern activists.

Yoon during a nationally televised speech on Monday proposed an "audacious" economic assistance package to North Korea if it takes steps to abandon its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles program. The offers of large-scale aid in food and health care and modernizing electricity generation systems and seaports and airports weren't meaningfully different from previous South Korean proposals rejected by the North, which is speeding the development of an arsenal Kim Jong Un sees as his strongest guarantee of survival.

Kim Yo-jong, one of the most powerful officials in her brother's government who oversees inter-Korean affairs, said Yoon displayed the "height of absurdity" with his offer, saying it was realistic as creating "mulberry fields in the dark blue ocean."

She said South Korea's words and actions would only incite "surging hatred and wrath" from North Koreans and insisted Pyongyang has no immediate plans to revive long-stalled diplomacy with Seoul. "It is our earnest desire to live without awareness of each other," she said.

Inter-Korean ties have worsened amid a stalemate in larger nuclear negotiations between North Korea and the U.S. that derailed in 2019 because of disagreements over a relaxation of crippling U.S.-led sanctions on the North in exchange for disarmament steps.

There are concerns that Kim Yo-jong's threats last week over the leafletting portends a provocation, of which the possibilities may include a nuclear or missile test or even border skirmishes. The United States and South Korea kick off their biggest combined training in years next week to counter the North Korean threat. The North describes such drills as invasion rehearsals and has often responded to them with missile tests or other provocations.

During Wednesday's news conference, Yoon expressed hope for meaningful dialogue with the North over his aid-for-disarmament proposal. Maintaining a reserved tone, Yoon said his government has no plans to pursue its own nuclear deterrent and doesn't desire political change in Pyongyang that's brought by force.

Yoon spoke hours after South Korea's military detected North Korea firing two suspected cruise missiles toward the sea and identified the western coastal site of Onchon as the launch location. Kim Yo-jong in her column said the weapons were fired from a bridge in the city of Anju, north of Onchon and farther inland, and ridiculed South Korean and U.S. capacities to monitor North Korean missile activity. The South's military has yet to release its analyzed flight details of those missiles.

"If the data and flight trajectory (of the missiles) are known, (the South) will be so bewildered and afraid," Kim Yo Jong said. "It will be a thing worthy of seeing how they will explain about it before their people."

The latest launches extended a record pace in North Korean missile testing in 2022, which has involved more than 30 ballistic launches, including the country's first demonstrations of intercontinental ballistic missiles in nearly five years.

	<p>North Korea's heightened testing activity underscores its dual intent to advance its arsenal and force the United States to accept the idea of the North as a nuclear power so it can negotiate economic and security concessions from a position of strength, experts say.</p> <p>Kim Jong-un could up the ante soon as there are indications that the North is preparing to conduct its first nuclear test since September 2017, when it claimed to have developed a thermonuclear weapon to fit on its ICBMs.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/19 Day 177 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/19/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-177-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russian forces may be preparing to stage a “provocation” at the Moscow-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Ukraine's military intelligence has warned. Ukraine's defence intelligence agency said it was concerned that Russia had plans to stage an incident at the plant on Friday, and had information that staff with Russia's Rosatom nuclear company had left the site. • The UN secretary general has called for an urgent withdrawal of military forces from the site. António Guterres said he was “gravely concerned” about the situation at the plant and said it had to be demilitarised, adding: “We must tell it like it is – any potential damage to Zaporizhzhia is suicide.” Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said he agreed with Guterres on a framework for a visit by the International Atomic Energy Agency watchdog to inspect the power plant. “We are worried. We don't want another Chernobyl,” the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, added. • At least 17 people were killed and 42 injured in two separate Russian attacks on Kharkiv, according to its regional governor. Three civilians were killed and 17 wounded in a pre-dawn rocket strike on Thursday, after an attack from Russia the day before. “As of now, 17 people have died in Kharkiv ... and 42 people have been injured,” Oleh Synehubov said, describing the attacks as “an act of terrorism”. • Four explosions hit an area near a major Russian military airport in Crimea on Thursday, local sources reported, but a pro-Moscow official said no damage had been done. The governor of Sevastopol, Mikhail Razvozhayev, said Russian anti-aircraft forces had downed a Ukrainian drone. • Two Russian villages were evacuated after a fire broke out at an ammunition depot near the border with Ukraine on Thursday, local authorities said. An ammunition depot caught fire near the village of Timonovo, less than 50km (30 miles) from the Ukrainian border in Belgorod province, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said in a statement. • The US is readying about \$800m of additional military aid to Ukraine and could announce it as soon as Friday, three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters on Thursday. President Joe Biden would authorise the assistance using his presidential drawdown authority, which allows the president to authorise the transfer of excess weapons from US stocks. • The Russian military announced that it has deployed warplanes armed with state-of-the-art hypersonic missiles to the country's Kaliningrad region, a move that has been broadly interpreted as a response to the west arming Ukraine. • Volodymyr Zelenskiy took over a major news conference after becoming irked by a interpreter's failure to translate his comments properly into English. Zelenskiy acted after the interpreter cut short his remarks during an event with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and United Nations secretary general António Guterres. • Zelenskiy confirmed that Ukraine has not changed its position on peace negotiations, saying talks with Russia are only possible if Russian forces leave illegally occupied territory in Ukraine. • Estonia has been hit by extensive cyber-attacks after removing a Soviet-era tank monument from a region whose population is predominantly ethnic Russians, its government said. Estonia's foreign minister also defended his country's decision to bar Russian tourists.
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HEADLINE	08/18 Tribe: state of emergency Chinook salmon
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/sauk-suiattle-indian-tribe-declares-state-emergency-declining-chinook-salmon-population/281-102c0ca2-dd5f-4932-913c-f52891ffc6a9
GIST	<p>DARRINGTON, Wash — The Sauk-Suiattle Tribal Council declared a State of Emergency Thursday over the decline in the Chinook salmon population, despite conservation efforts.</p> <p>Chinook salmon of the Skagit River and its tributaries, including the Sauk, Suiattle and other streams, were designated a threatened species in 1999 and the population has continued to decline since 2007, according to the Tribe's resolution.</p> <p>The population fell below thresholds that would trigger directed fishery, despite rehabilitation, habitat restoration and conservation efforts by Treaty tribes, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, federal agencies and the Skagit River System Cooperative.</p> <p>The Tribe declared the native Chinook salmon of the Skagit River basin system to be in a State of Emergency. The Tribe is calling upon the state, federal and local governments, Treaty tribes and Tribal organizations to prioritize the preservation and recovery of the salmon population.</p> <p>Advocates have also been calling on added protections for other Chinook salmon populations in recent months. The fate of a commercial Chinook salmon fishery in southeast Alaska was called into question when an environmental group sued to stop the harvest, arguing it was a threat to protected fish and endangered killer whales that eat them.</p> <p>The decrease in salmon also poses a threat to Southern Resident killer whales, a fragile population of orcas that span from the California coast to Haida Gwaii in British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands.</p> <p>A recent study found the killer whales have not had enough food to eat for several years. Chinook salmon represent up to 90% of the Southern Resident killer whales' diet during the summer months, according to the study. Orcas are estimated to eat between 166,000 and 216,300 Chinook salmon between April-October.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 WA first pediatric monkeypox case
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/monkeypox/washington-first-pediatric-monkeypox-case/281-8968a514-21ed-4cad-b3a3-2b6fd1dc5f49
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, USA — The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) reported the state's first pediatric monkeypox case in a 17 year old on Thursday.</p> <p>The DOH declined to specify what county the case was reported in for privacy reasons.</p> <p>"While the risk for most people remains low, this case is a reminder that anyone can get [monkeypox]," the DOH said in a statement.</p> <p>So far Washington state has reported 333 monkeypox cases, with the majority in King and Pierce Counties. King County reported 271 cases, while Pierce County reported 21.</p> <p>Monkeypox spreads through direct contact with the skin or body fluids of an infected person, contact with virus-contaminated objects like bedding or clothing or by respiratory droplets during direct and prolonged face-to-face contact, according to the DOH.</p> <p>Symptoms include a rash that can appear anywhere on the body, fever, headache and swollen lymph nodes.</p> <p>The rash will typically turn into raised bumps which then fill with fluid. The rash eventually scabs over and the scabs fall off, according to the DOH.</p>

	Most people recover in two-four weeks although the lesions can leave scars. The disease can be serious, especially for immunocompromised people, children, and pregnant people.
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HEADLINE	08/18 Tacoma Humane: surge in pet surrenders
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/surge-pet-surrenders-leaves-tacoma-humane-over-max-capacity/EXB5IX6GQZGL7K6JXJVXIGHOVI/
GIST	<p>PIERCE COUNTY, Wash. — People are forced to give up their pets – that’s the latest impact of rising rents and increases in costs of living. And it’s more than shelters can handle. The Humane Society says there’s no more room, especially in Pierce County.</p> <p>The Tacoma-Pierce County Humane Society says that so far this year, 212 companion animals are coming through their doors every day – from stray cats and lost dogs from animal control to people who need to surrender their pets.</p> <p>Now they’re pleading for help and urging people considering a pet adoption to make that happen now. That’s exactly what Torie Brannen did after hearing about the shelter’s situation.</p> <p>“I just adopted Crackers. She’s a little kitten,” Brannen said. “I’ve been wanting to adopt a cat for a long time and I got a little teary in there just thinking about it. Their shelters were really full and it just seemed like a sign.”</p> <p>The shelter is currently working on a campaign to clear out the shelter by offering deep discounts on the traditional pet adoption fees that can cost hundreds of dollars. Until the end of August, adopting an adult cat costs \$25, and an adult dog \$50.</p> <p>Lindsey Heaney says the effort is bringing in many families, which is already starting to help. But their shelter is still bursting at the seams.</p> <p>“Usually we’re able to have 300 animals, and we’re caring for over 700. So thankfully, we have a lot of foster homes to help out with that,” Heaney said.</p> <p>The pet support team at Tacoma Humane works with families who need to surrender their pets.</p> <p>“It’s always a heartbreaking scenario,” said Marley Weiss, a pet support team member.</p> <p>The shelter says one big reason fueling the surge in pets they’re seeing is rent hikes forcing people to move. Those costs are on top of things like pet fees and breed restrictions.</p> <p>“Being able to find a pet-friendly place at a cost they can afford,” Heaney said.</p> <p>“People having to work two jobs because things are getting so ridiculously expensive you just don’t have the time,” Weiss said about some of the cases she has seen.</p> <p>Last year, Tacoma saw the highest rent increase by percentage in Western Washington - nearly 19%. As of July 2022, Apartment List showed the year-to-year rent hike was 9% – lower but still significant.</p> <p>Then there are the vet costs that catch people off guard, which have also been contributing to the surge of people giving up pets.</p> <p>“Having puppies and kittens are expensive. It’s like having a baby,” Weiss said. “People don’t know about pet insurance and it’s hard to manage those expenses you’re not thinking about right away, like a broken leg or kennel cough or senior dogs.”</p>

	<p>New kitten parent, Brannen, agrees the increased cost of living has been a challenge. Her nonrefundable pet deposit cost \$400.</p> <p>“So unfortunately pricey,” Brannen said. “It’ll be worth it. Cats live for up to 20 years, so she’s going to be a friend for a long time.”</p> <p>If you need help paying for pet food or even certain medical expenses, Tacoma Humane might be able to help in a way that lets you keep your pet. People can support Tacoma-Pierce County Humane Society by visiting https://www.thehumanesociety.org/.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 First local acquired case of anaplasmosis
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/washington-man-hospitalized-with-first-locally-acquired-case-anaplasmosis/7F6OBG5VABF4RNB3MI6C57DKYA/
GIST	<p>A Whatcom County man has been hospitalized with the first locally acquired human case of the tick-borne disease anaplasmosis, according to the Washington State Department of Health.</p> <p>The 80-year-old man is now in recovery after he was hospitalized after working in the brush in Mason County, where he was likely bitten by a tick.</p> <p>While human cases of anaplasmosis have been in the state before, all previous cases involved travel outside the state.</p> <p>Until now, only dogs have been diagnosed with locally acquired anaplasmosis in Washington state.</p> <p>Anaplasmosis can cause mild to moderate symptoms in people, including fever, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting and loss of appetite, usually one to two weeks after being bit by an infected tick.</p> <p>The disease is treatable. However, if a person has pre-existing conditions, it can cause a more severe reaction.</p> <p>In Washington, the disease is spread by the western blacklegged tick, which is usually found in western Washington and the eastern slopes of the Cascades.</p> <p>There is no vaccine and the disease can only be prevented by avoiding tick bites.</p>
Return to Top	<i>More information can be found at doh.wa.gov.</i>

HEADLINE	08/18 State fire mobilization for Whitman Co. fire
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/wildfire/state-fire-mobilization-wagner-road-fire-whitman-county/293-30a33f59-0439-4c4a-9d1e-22ade1e79275
GIST	<p>WHITMAN COUNTY, Wash. — State fire mobilization has been authorized for the Wagner Road Fire currently burning in Whitman County near the city of Ewan.</p> <p>According to a press release, Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste authorized mobilization around 4:45 p.m. at the request of Fire Chief John Laughtenslaugh with Whitman County Fire District 2.</p> <p>The Wagner Road fire reportedly started around 2:04 p.m. on Aug. 18, 2022. At this time, the fire has grown to 4,000 acres, according to the Northeast Washington Interagency Communications Center.</p> <p>According to WSP, the fire is burning in cropland and rangeland, threatening structures, utilities and farmland.</p> <p>Level 3 evacuations are in effect at this time. The fire is currently under investigation.</p>

WSP also says the State Emergency Operations Center at Camp Murray remains activated to Level 2 to help coordinate state assistance for the Wagner Road Fire. Mobilization specialists have ordered air resources at this time and personnel at the State Fire Marshal's Office are working remotely to coordinate the dispatch of resources.

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HEADLINE	08/18 Flooding adds to Afghanistan's crises
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/18/world/asia/afghanistan-flood-taliban.html
GIST	<p>SHINWARI, Afghanistan — As heavy rains poured down on his village in eastern Afghanistan around 11 a.m. on Monday morning, Meya, a 57-year-old farmer, gathered his wife and daughters and rushed from their small home toward the safety of the mountains. Looking back, he saw a thunderous wave of water tearing through the village — and his wife being swept away in the storm.</p> <p>“At that moment I completely lost control,” said Meya, who goes by one name.</p> <p>Days later, as he and his neighbors salvaged what they could from the wreckage, Meya stared at his destroyed village in dismay. His wife had drowned. His house was destroyed. His two cows and three goats were killed. His jewelry and all of his cash — around \$400 — were washed away in the flood.</p> <p>Over the past week, flash floods across eastern, central and southern Afghanistan have killed at least 43 people and injured 106 more, according to Mohammad Nasim Haqqani, a spokesman for Afghanistan's Ministry of Disaster Management.</p> <p>The floods' toll, local officials say, is likely to rise as more bodies are discovered. Around 790 homes have been damaged or destroyed in the flooding, which has affected nearly 4,000 families, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.</p> <p>The flooding offered the latest blow to Afghanistan, which has been seized by an economic collapse and a spate of natural disasters and deadly terrorist attacks in recent months.</p> <p>Around half the country's 39 million people are facing life-threatening food insecurity, according to the United Nations. An earthquake in June in eastern Afghanistan killed around 1,000 people and destroyed the homes of thousands more. The latest terrorist attack — on a mosque in the capital, Kabul, on Wednesday — killed at least 21 people and wounded 33 others, officials said.</p> <p>The back-to-back crises have tested the Taliban's ability to provide security and badly needed emergency assistance even as their government slides further into pariah state status. The Taliban's decision to close girls' secondary schools indefinitely in March, and the public revelation earlier this month that the Taliban had been sheltering Al Qaeda's leader in Kabul, have increasingly alienated the country from Western donors despite the worsening humanitarian crisis.</p> <p>For millions of Afghans, the recent devastation has also underscored how even after the end of 20 years of war, a respite that many had hoped for remains out of reach.</p> <p>On Wednesday morning, dozens of families gathered in Tai Qamari village, in the eastern province of Parwan, to salvage what they could from the flooding wreckage. Dozens of cattle — crucial assets for farmers here — had been washed away in the flood, along with the two bridges connecting the village to surrounding towns.</p> <p>The wells that provided water to residents were filled with mud. In the courtyard of one destroyed home, apricots and berries — once a family's garden — stuck out from the muddied earth. One woman in a blue head scarf had just returned from a neighboring village where she had gone to borrow some clothes for her children. Looking at the wreckage, she began to cry.</p>

“My nerves are broken, my whole being is destroyed,” said the woman, who declined to provide her name.

At a mosque nearby, Hashmatullah Ghanizada, 24, gathered with dozens of others from the village to mourn the dead. Moments before floods swept through his village on Monday morning, Mr. Ghanizada had been unloading bricks from his truck — part of a project to expand his small home — when it began to rain heavily. Soon he heard the thunderous sound of a flash flood tearing into the valley.

He joined dozens of families that scurried up a nearby mountain for safety, he said. Once the flood water subsided, he and many of his neighbors returned to the village to collect whatever belongings — important documents, money, gold — they could.

That’s when another flash flood struck.

“I saw two people disappearing in the flood, one was a woman and the other was a boy,” Mr. Ghanizada said. “We could not have done anything else to save them. Within seconds they were gone.”

For many, the floods swept away not only their loved ones and life savings but also their livelihoods. Across the districts affected by the floods in Parwan Province, hundreds of acres of orchards once packed with apricots, grapes, almonds, apples, pomegranates and peaches were destroyed by the fast flow of water, mud and stone.

Ahmad Gul, 50, made a living by harvesting almonds from the 120 trees he kept on his six acres of land near the village — nearly all of which were destroyed in the flood. Bending over to dig one of the trees out of a pit of mud, a last-ditch attempt to salvage what he could, he was unsure how he would ever rebuild his meager livelihood.

“I have nothing left — no bread to eat, no clothes to wear and no place to stay,” he said, staring at the muddied earth beneath him.

The Taliban carried out a search and rescue operation on Tuesday, and aid organizations had begun to deliver food aid and makeshift shelters to the affected areas. But many of those affected said the assistance was not enough and called on the Taliban government to do more to help them rebuild their livelihoods.

“Our problems cannot be solved with a blanket and a tent,” said Hajji Hayatullah, 66.

A 30-minute drive away in Khah Sanguk village, dozens of homes were surrounded by a lake of mud more than two meters deep. The mud seemed to consume everything: homes, storage sheds and cars.

As news of possible additional flooding in the coming days spread, most residents were preparing to evacuate the makeshift shelters they had sought refuge in after the first floods struck. They carried what they could. One woman carried a mattress. A young boy balanced a sewing machine wrapped in a red scarf on his shoulder.

Others were busy digging out their stores of firewood — a lifeline as the weather becomes colder in the coming months.

“Maybe it will take about a month to clean the entire wood store,” said Gol Marjan as he dug through the mud.

But first, he would try to salvage a car he had parked near his house, he said. He needed it to leave the area before the next rains struck.

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SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article264623036.html
GIST	<p>A recent study found that people in 33 out of the 39 Washington counties have become more overweight over the last 10 years, according to BarBend, an online strength training resource and fitness news outlet.</p> <p>BarBend studied obesity levels throughout Washington state and data from County Health Ratings to see changes in obesity from 2012 to 2022.</p> <p>County Health Ratings defines obesity levels as the percentage of those over 18 years old with a body mass index of 30 or higher.</p> <p>As most Washington counties saw an increase in obesity levels, counties such as Benton, Cowlitz and King saw no change compared to 2012. Garfield and Lewis counties even saw decreases up to 4% in obesity levels.</p> <p>THE MOST OBESE WASHINGTON COUNTIES</p> <p>Most Washington counties saw an increase in obesity levels.</p> <p>Whatcom County had the highest increase in obesity levels, increasing 9% and having 33% of adult residents with a body mass index of 30 or more. Douglas County also had an increase of 9%, with an obesity level of 37%.</p> <p>Pierce County had a 1% increase, with 32% of its residents being overweight. Thurston County had a 4% increase and 33% of its current population being obese.</p> <p>Grant County has the highest obesity level in 2022 at 39%, a 6% increase since its 2012 data.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Probe into Seattle leaders' deleted texts
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/king-county-prosecutor-has-asked-sheriff-to-investigate-seattle-leaders-deleted-texts/
GIST	<p>King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg has asked Sheriff Patti Cole-Tindall to put together an investigation into the deletion of text messages from the phones of then-Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan and other city leaders in 2020.</p> <p>“It wasn’t clear to me that anyone was going to start this investigation without prompting,” Satterberg said Thursday in an emailed statement. “Just like the public’s right to an open courtroom, people have a right to know what is in public documents — including text messages.”</p> <p>Satterberg’s office requested the investigation July 28, spokesperson Casey McNerthney said.</p> <p>“We are in the early stages of reviewing the matter,” said Cole-Tindall spokesperson Cynthia Sampson, giving no other information.</p> <p>Last year, a whistleblower in Durkan’s office revealed that the mayor’s texts from a 10-month period — including tumultuous weeks in early summer 2020 when police deployed tear gas against Black Lives Matter protest crowds and vacated the East Precinct — were missing.</p> <p>The Seattle Times subsequently discovered that a number of other leaders had failed to retain their texts from approximately the same period, including fire Chief Harold Scoggins and the police chief at the time, Carmen Best.</p> <p>Anyone who willfully destroys a public record that’s supposed to be kept is guilty of a felony under state law. Most elected and public officials in Washington, including mayors, are required to take training that include information about retaining records.</p>

[In February](#) of this year, a forensic analysis, commissioned in response to lawsuits over the city's handling of the 2020 protests, indicated that Durkan's phone was manually set in July 2020 to automatically delete texts after 30 days.

The analysis didn't determine who changed the text-retention setting on Durkan's phone. Durkan has said she did not delete the texts and that most of her deleted texts have been reproduced from other phones.

She's said the city's information technology department "configured, issued and maintained" her phones and worked on them in July 2020 to fix problems. The information technology department has said it's not the department's practice to change retention settings to delete messages.

The forensic analysis didn't review why at least seven other officials, including Scoggins, Best and several police commanders under Best, failed to retain their texts from early summer 2020. But the analysis did find data consistent with testimony Best gave in a deposition last year that she had periodically deleted her texts.

The analysis couldn't find backups of Durkan's and Best's texts from May 2020 and June 2020. It indicated that Durkan's phone was at a certain point set to "disable and delete" texts stored in the cloud.

Several state rules and laws, civil and criminal, govern the retention and destruction of public records, including texts.

Guidelines for preserving public records require that texts and other communications by local elected officials about public business be kept for at least two years before being transferred to the state's archives "for appraisal and selective retention."

Durkan and Best didn't immediately respond Thursday to requests for comment.

Following the release of the forensic analysis, the president of the Washington Coalition for Open Government and Seattle City Councilmember Andrew Lewis separately [called for an outside investigation](#) into the matter.

Mayor Bruce Harrell, who succeeded Durkan in January, said in February he would consult with City Attorney Ann Davison's office to determine an appropriate course of action. He didn't subsequently share any next steps.

During last year's Seattle elections, mayoral candidate Colleen Echohawk asked state Attorney General Bob Ferguson to investigate the missing texts. Ferguson's office said only local law enforcement could investigate. At the time, Satterberg's office said it had not received a referral about the matter from any law enforcement agency.

"The case had never been referred to us, and typically we don't ask for an investigation to be conducted," Satterberg said Thursday in his statement. "But in recent weeks and months, I heard from people in the community that this matter was important to them and I considered it my responsibility to make this request to the sheriff before the end of my term."

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HEADLINE	08/18 Oregon first pediatric monkeypox case
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/oregon-identifies-first-pediatric-monkeypox-case/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Oregon health officials said Wednesday that the state has identified its first pediatric case of the monkeypox virus.</p> <p>The case is linked to an adult monkeypox infection that was diagnosed in July, the Oregon Health Authority said in a statement.</p>

	<p>Health authorities did not release any information about the patient, citing privacy.</p> <p>Oregon has identified 116 presumed and confirmed cases of the monkeypox virus, including 112 men and four women, in seven counties.</p> <p>The cases are located in the following counties: four in Clackamas, one in Columbia, one in Coos, 20 in Lane, one in Marion, 73 in Multnomah and 16 in Washington.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 More delays Sound Transit Eastside service
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/more-delays-for-light-rail-to-bellevue-redmond-federal-way-lynnwood/
GIST	<p>KENT — Sound Transit revealed Thursday that light-rail service to the Eastside, which was to begin by July 2023, will open a year or more later because contractors must reinforce or rebuild 4 miles of flawed concrete track supports through Mercer Island and Seattle.</p> <p>Meanwhile, a landslide in Kent last month revealed that the ground was more unstable than expected, so builders must design different underground column foundations. That could delay the trains between Angle Lake and Federal Way from late 2024 until sometime in 2025.</p> <p>And on the Northgate-Lynnwood extension, Deputy CEO Kimberly Farley anticipates a holdup of four to six months beyond the July 2024 target, mainly because of last winter’s four-month strike by concrete-truck drivers.</p> <p>The strike is also pushing the \$1.5 billion Redmond extension, to add Marymoor Village and downtown Redmond stations, toward a four- to five-month delay, after the December 2024 goal.</p> <p>Farley delivered the sobering news Thursday to the transit governing board’s System Expansion Committee.</p> <p>So far, the main thing lost is time, for people eager for efficient train travel and for taxpayers who’ve been paying since the 2008 and 2016 elections to fund these lines.</p> <p>Farley said the problems won’t result in massive cost overruns that exceed project budgets.</p> <p>No cost estimates related to these problems were released, and a report said negotiations are underway with construction companies. Events beyond Sound Transit’s control, including the concrete strike and COVID-19, would lead to longer contract deadlines, Farley said, instead of extra payments.</p> <p>“We will open these transformative projects, and we will do so as rapidly as possible, with our chief priority being our passengers’ needs for safety, quality and long-term durability,” interim CEO Brooke Belman said.</p> <p>Eastside trackways</p> <p>Sound Transit previously acknowledged its \$3.7 billion, 14-mile line from International District/Chinatown Station to the Overlake area would miss its July 2023 grand opening date because of flaws in concrete track supports, where rails are being laid over the former Interstate 90 express lanes.</p> <p>But the project team discovered worse conditions as recently as June.</p> <p>Contractor Kiewit-Hoffman is expected to partially replace the top 6 to 18 inches of these concrete blocks, known as plinths, or to surround them with reinforcing materials, said Jon Lebo, Sound Transit’s executive project director for East Link. Contractors and advising engineers will conduct tests of different methods, he said.</p>

Problems were first discovered in 2019, and Sound Transit approved the use of mortar to adjust the plinths, which failed. Workers have been lifting rails this year, to grind and resurface plinths that were built incorrectly to the wrong dimensions or contained weak concrete.

“We thought we had a solution to the problem that we were confident would work ... Unfortunately, the solutions we put into place failed, and every time we went to implement a new solution, we found more issues,” Farley said. Digging deeper, officials discovered too much or too little rebar near surfaces.

The troubled areas total 4 miles and 5,455 plinths, Lebo said.

Another kind of track support, on the I-90 floating bridge deck, was structurally sound, but about 1% of the customized nylon inserts became stripped after metal rail fasteners were bolted in. All 19,400 bolt inserts are being replaced and strengthened by epoxy.

Farley said that, fortunately, “our relationship with the contractor is quite good. We’re in solution mode, to find out how to resolve these issues rather than point fingers at each other.”

The most recent Agency Progress Report, as of June 30, mentioned errors and delays blamed on other contractors across multiple segments of the Eastside line. Those challenges range from inadequate bearing pads under elevated track bed girders to a lack of train clearance at a curve inside Bellevue Downtown Station to a partial rebuild of the Redmond Technology Station parking garage, where some concrete beams weren’t strong enough.

Repairs are either completed or likely to be done before the I-90 problem is solved.

Liquefaction near Federal Way

A small shelf of crumbling dirt in Kent, about 200 feet long and 9 feet high, caused a three-day closure of a southbound Interstate 5 lane in mid-July, to stabilize the area near South 259th Place, where Sound Transit will build aerial guideways.

That was the tip of the iceberg.

Sound Transit says contractor Kiewit-Hoffman now needs to engineer special foundations, so that trackway columns will support girders and trains despite the liquefiable soil.

Columns are generally 50 feet deep, while the unstable soil is 0 to 40 feet deep, spokesperson David Jackson said. So the modified columns mainly need to resist lateral force in the event of an earthquake.

The site was quiet Thursday morning, with no crews in the troubled area marked by plastic sheets and a partial retaining wall, as construction continued farther south.

Farley said some other challenges await for the \$2.5 billion project, such as how to construct and control traffic access roads, mainly at Federal Way Downtown Station.

Concrete and rocks

Contractors poured the wrong kind of small rock to ballast the rails in North Seattle, between Northgate Station and the approach to future Northeast 130th Station. But they rapidly substituted better-grade material this summer, to avoid triggering delays, spokesperson John Gallagher said.

A greater problem was the four-month concrete-drivers strike that interrupted some crucial pours and caused layoffs in the 8.5-mile, \$2.7 billion project from Northgate to Lynnwood, officials said.

The 1,670-space parking garage at Lynnwood City Center Station was affected by the strike. Farley said train service can begin before garages are completed, if need be.

Project reports point to broader problems, throughout the industry, of too few skilled trades workers, megaproject engineers and supervisors. That's a potential obstacle to some quality-control steps Farley described, such as more inspections.

In a staff memo, Sound Transit accepted some blame for failing to audit contractors' quality assurance and quality control rigorously enough, to find problems earlier.

A June progress report also mentions the risk that there won't be enough operations experts who can conduct months of train tests when the tracks are finished, which could happen simultaneously on two or more lines, and "blind spots" where glitches don't get discovered because technical staff familiar with the project move to other jobs, reports say.

Delays on the Eastside might result in Bellevue and Redmond tracks opening at or near the same time, but Farley said it's too soon to know.

And if the Bellevue line — which includes a new train maintenance base — takes longer to finish than the Lynnwood or Federal Way segments, that would foul up the overall railcar supply, and possibly the frequency or train length across the metro area. Farley said staff are already thinking about strategies, and will know more late this year, when they publish new goals for grand opening dates.

Committee Chair Claudia Balducci of Bellevue, who has worked for 15 years toward delivering Eastside rail, suggested that if I-90 isn't usable on time, Sound Transit should either beef up its Route 550 express bus across Lake Washington to rail-like quality, or even operate a light-rail segment reaching Eastside stations only. (Former Redmond Mayor John Marchione mentioned that notion years ago, in the event the unprecedented floating bridge route is unbuildable.)

Belman emphasized that East Link is the region's most complex transit project to date.

"This is truly historic. No other region of our country has so much transit infrastructure concurrently under construction and preparing to enter service in such a compact timeline," her memo says.

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HEADLINE	08/18 New Native-run health clinic Pioneer Square
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/new-native-run-health-clinic-opens-in-pioneer-square/
GIST	<p>A new Native-run health clinic opened in Seattle's Pioneer Square on Thursday afternoon, integrating traditional Indian healing practices with full medical, pharmacy, behavioral health and substance use treatment services.</p> <p>The 3,000-square-foot clinic at 122 Second Ave. S., nestled near the corner of Yesler Way, adds to the options available for culturally competent health care, after years of work by the Seattle Indian Health Board, Chief Seattle Club and a number of community partners and city and state elected officials. Clinic leaders hope the space invites both Native and non-Native patients, they said Thursday.</p> <p>"Our community has been so disenfranchised by administrative services for way too long," Derrick Belgarde, executive director of Chief Seattle Club, said at the grand opening. "We know it takes a culturally responsive approach to meet the needs of our people and our community. ... Native people empower to serve Native people. We know what works for our communities."</p> <p>He continued in a statement, "For our members to have food, shelter and medicine under one roof, being brought to them by their own people, is a dream come true."</p> <p>The clinic will also offer case management services to address housing and food insecurities, among other needs. In addition, a mobile van will provide weekly dental services, according to clinic leaders.</p>

“We’ll have the ability to do some ceremonies, like talking circles, sweat lodge, drumming [in addition to primary care and other services],” Esther Lucero, president and CEO of the Seattle Indian Health Board, said in an interview this week. “Those types of things are really core to wellness in our communities.”

She continued, “[Federally run, Native] boarding schools were designed to strip us from our traditional practices. This is reinserting that back into the culture of our community. ... And for non-Native people, we’ve found our ceremonies can be just as healing.”

The space, which is located on the bottom floor of Chief Seattle Club’s ʔálʔal (which is pronounced all-all and means “home” in Lushootseed) building, welcomes patients with whiffs of cedar and walls lined with sweet grass. A series of hallways connects a pharmacy, a medical laboratory, patient exam rooms and a space for telehealth appointments, said site manager Alesia Torres.

The clinic will be run by two full-time providers, two medical assistants and a nurse, able to take patients regardless of insurance status.

Because it shares a building with Chief Seattle Club, which provides food, housing assistance, legal services and other support to urban Native community members, patients will also have access to the club’s resources, Lucero said.

“Today is an important day for Seattle’s urban Indians,” said Seattle City Council President Debora Juarez, a Blackfeet tribal member. “This clinic is an example of how community collaboration impacts the lives of our people.”

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, chair of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Deputy Mayor Greg Wong and Auburn City Councilmember Chris Stearns also spoke at the opening.

Earlier this year, Murray secured \$1 million in federal funding to help finish the construction of the ʔálʔal building. She also secured \$5 million in federal funding in the fiscal year 2023 draft appropriations bill she’s working to pass this year, to support the Seattle Indian Health Board’s ongoing work.

The Seattle Indian Health Board, whose main clinic is based in the Chinatown International District, started a new, intensive outpatient program in January for people facing substance use and other behavioral health challenges. The board plans to expand those services to the new Pioneer Square location, as well as a Lake City location in September.

On Thursday, clinic leaders and elected officials cheered as Lucero, Belgarde, Juarez and Murray snipped a large red ribbon in front of the clinic entrance. It’s just the start of what they hope will become a trend toward this clinic model, Lucero said.

“We hoped we’d be a model for other communities of color of what it looks like to not compete with one another,” Lucero said. “To stand with community to best serve the needs of our people.”

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HEADLINE	08/18 Extra monkeypox vax for gay pride events
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/monkeypox-science-health-government-and-politics-956ee596ebd26d795764e2803ed4a0c4
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. is setting aside an extra 50,000 doses of monkeypox vaccine for places with upcoming gay pride events, health officials said Thursday.</p> <p>The number of doses sent to each place will be based on factors like the size of the event, how many health workers will be available to give shots, and how many of the attendees are considered at highest risk for catching the virus.</p>

“More shots in arms is how we get the outbreak under control,” Bob Fenton, the White House monkeypox response coordinator, told reporters Thursday. He said the effort is an attempt to “meet people where they are.”

At least a dozen U.S. pride events are scheduled over the next two months, including large gatherings in Atlanta and New Orleans in early September. U.S. officials said they will send up to 2,000 additional doses to North Carolina, where the Charlotte Pride Festival & Parade will be held this weekend.

Southern Decadence, one of the nation’s largest LGBTQ events, is expected to attract 200,000 or more people to New Orleans over Labor Day weekend. The Bourbon Street Extravaganza, a free concert held amid the event, [has been canceled](#) over monkeypox concerns, organizers said this week.

Frank Perez, a former grand marshal of the parade that’s the centerpiece of Southern Decadence, said a number of New Orleans gay bars have already had vaccine events. He said so far officials have done an adequate job with the vaccine campaign although “more is better.”

Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cautioned: “While we are offering the vaccine at these events to those at high risk, this is a two-dose vaccine series, and receiving the vaccine at the event will not provide protection at the event itself.”

Health officials also are urging other steps to prevent the spread of the virus, including temporarily limiting sexual partners.

Monkeypox is endemic in parts of Africa, where people have been infected through bites from rodents or small animals, but it wasn’t considered a disease that [spreads easily](#) among people until May, when infections emerged in Europe and the U.S.

There have been more than 39,000 cases reported in countries that have not [historically seen](#) monkeypox. The vast majority have occurred in men who have sex with men, but health officials stress that anyone can get monkeypox.

The U.S. [has the most infections](#) of any country — more than 13,500. About 98% of U.S. cases are men and about 93% were men who reported recent [sexual contact](#) with other men.

Officials say the virus has been spreading mainly through skin-on-skin contact, but they warn it might also transmit in other ways, including through touching linens used by someone with monkeypox.

People with monkeypox may experience fever, body aches, chills and fatigue. Many in the outbreak have developed extremely painful zit-like bumps. No one in the U.S. has died, but deaths have been reported in other countries.

The U.S. has a limited supply of what is considered the main weapon against the virus — a vaccine called Jynneos. The doses are currently being given to people soon after they think they were exposed. Scientists are still trying to establish how well the shots are working.

The government [last week](#) moved to stretch the supply by giving people one-fifth the usual dose, injected just under the skin, instead of a full vial injected into deeper tissue.

Many health workers may have little experience giving shots using the just-under-the-skin method, which requires different needles and syringes. Some health departments have started doing that, but some local officials have said they may need a week or more to make the change.

Officials this week announced the release of 442,000 of the smaller doses for order by state, local and territorial health departments. On Thursday, they said more is coming next week — 1.8 million doses, or 360,000 vials.

	<p>Officials also announced a new agreement with a Michigan manufacturer to help speed production of 5.5 million vaccine vials recently ordered by the U.S. government.</p> <p>Under the deal, Grand River Aseptic Manufacturing will help package raw vaccine ingredients currently stored at an overseas facility owned by Bavarian Nordic, which makes the Jynneos vaccine. Officials said the extra capacity should help speed up U.S. vaccine orders, most of which weren't expected to be delivered until next year. The Biden administration has faced weeks of criticism for not ordering more vaccine sooner.</p> <p>Also on Thursday, health officials said next week they will boost the supply of TPOXX, a drug for treating monkeypox infections, by 50,000 treatment courses.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Iran hardliners: list of 'US concessions'
SOURCE	https://www.iranintl.com/en/202208182659
GIST	<p>Some details about alleged US sanctions concessions to Iran in case of a nuclear deal is circulating among hardliners in Tehran, obtained by Iran International.</p> <p>According to this information, the implementation of a nuclear agreement will take 120 days during which a series of steps will be taken by both sides, including the release of Iranians imprisoned in the United States for violating US sanctions and other acts for the benefit of Iran's government, and US citizens held hostage in Iran.</p> <p>Iranian hardliners who are circulating the information call it a list of "concessions" by the United States, but this claim cannot be verified.</p> <p>They include the immediate release of \$7 billion frozen in two South Korean banks and annulment of three executive orders signed by former President Donald Trump after he withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, the JCPOA.</p> <p>Also, Iran will be allowed to sell 50 million barrels of oil in the 120-day period, presumably with the necessary arrangements for receiving the proceeds through legal banking channels.</p> <p>Currently, Iran ships its oil primarily to China in clandestine ways and it is not clear how much cash it receives and how much of the trade is based on barter.</p> <p>The legal sale of 50 million barrels at current crude oil prices would generate another \$4 billion for Iran in the first 120 days. The oil in question is most probably what Iran has stockpiled, trying to find customers. There were reports in the past that Tehran might have stored up to 100 million barrels both on land and on tankers.</p> <p>Also, the information circulating says that sanctions imposed on 17 banks will be removed, which would most probably include the Central Bank of Iran. All other sanctioned Iranian banks are either directly owned by the government or are quasi-state banks, some probably also affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard (IRGC).</p> <p>Sanctions will be removed from 150 institutions or entities, again all affiliated with the state or with centers of power such as "charitable" organizations linked to the office of the Supreme Leader and possibly the IRGC. However, not having the list of these entities it is hard to be certain.</p> <p>One name mentioned is a huge business conglomerate, presented as a charity, directly run by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's office. The entity is called The Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO), which is known in Persian simply as Setad.</p>

	<p>The Biden Administration has been claiming that it will not lift non-nuclear sanctions, such as those imposed for links to terrorism, Iran's missile program or human rights violations. EIKO was sanctioned on January 13, 2021, days before President Trump left office, under the Executive Order (E.O.) 13876, which was imposed for Iran's regional destabilizing activities and its missile program.</p> <p>Finally, the information received by Iran International indicates that an exemption will be granted to companies engaging with Iran in case the US withdraws from the agreement and re-imposes sanctions. The duration of this exemption is not mentioned, but it was reported this week that it could be as long as one year.</p> <p>US Republicans and other critics of reviving the JCPOA under these conditions say that if Democrats lose control of the US Congress, they will derail President Joe Biden's concessions to Iran.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Climate bill unlikely beneficiary: oil, gas
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/climate-bills-beneficiary-us-oil-gas-industry-88547070
GIST	<p>BILLINGS, Mont. -- The U.S. oil industry hit a legal roadblock in January when a judge struck down a \$192 million oil and natural gas lease sale in the Gulf of Mexico over future global warming emissions from burning the fuels. It came at a pivotal time for Chevron, Exxon and other industry players: the Biden administration had curtailed opportunities for new offshore drilling, while raising climate change concerns.</p> <p>The industry's setback was short-lived, however. The climate measure President Joe Biden signed Tuesday bypasses the administration's concerns about emissions and guarantees new drilling opportunities in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska. The legislation was crafted to secure backing from a top recipient of oil and gas donations, Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin, and was shaped in part by industry lobbyists.</p> <p>While the Inflation Reduction Act concentrates on clean energy incentives that could drastically reduce overall U.S. emissions, it also buoys oil and gas interests by mandating leasing of vast areas of public lands and off the nation's coasts. And it locks renewables and fossil fuels together: If the Biden administration wants solar and wind on public lands, it must offer new oil and gas leases first.</p> <p>As a result, U.S. oil and gas production and emissions from burning fuels could keep growing, according to some industry analysts and climate experts. With domestic demand sliding, that means more fossil fuels exported to growing foreign markets, including from the Gulf where pollution from oil and gas activity plagues many poor and minority communities.</p> <p>To the industry, the new law signals Democrats are willing to work with them and to abandon the notion fossil fuels could soon be rendered obsolete, said Andrew Gillick with Enverus, an energy analytics company whose data is used by industry and government agencies.</p> <p>"The folks that think oil and gas will be gone in 10 years may not be thinking through what this means," Gillick said. "Both supply and demand will increase over the next decade."</p> <p>The result would be more planet-warming carbon dioxide — up to 110 million tons (100 million metric tons) annually — from U.S.-produced oil and gas by 2030, with most coming from fuel burned after export, according to some economists and analysts.</p> <p>A Department of Energy analysis obtained by The Associated Press Thursday said the law's leasing provisions "may lead to some increase" in carbon pollution, but that other provisions would cut 35 tons of greenhouse gas for every new ton of fossil fuel pollution.</p> <p>The law reinstates within 30 days the 2,700-square miles (6,950-square kilometers) of Gulf leases that had been withheld. It ensures companies like Chevron will have the chance to expand and overrides the</p>

concerns of U.S. District Judge Rudolph Contreras that the government was “barreling full-steam ahead” without adequately considering global emission increases.

The measure's importance was underscored by Chevron executives during a recent earnings call, where they predicted continued growth in the Gulf and tied that directly to being able "to lease and acquire additional acreage."

The fossil fuel industry's ambitions are now directly linked to wind and solar development: The bill prohibits leasing of federal lands and waters for renewable energy unless the government has offered at least 2 million acres (810,000 hectares) of public land and 60 million acres (24 million hectares) in federal waters for oil and gas leasing during the prior year. The law does not require leases to be sold, only offered for sale.

The measure's critics say that's holding renewables hostage unless the fossil fuel industry gets its way. Some accuse Biden and Democrats of abandoning pledges to confront the industry.

"It's 10 more years of mandatory leases," said Brett Hartl with the Center for Biological Diversity. "We will do our damndest but it's hard to fight them all."

Communities near polluting industrial plants will continue to suffer if the oil and gas industry remains vibrant, said Beverly Wright, executive director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice and a member of the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council. She worries that incentives in the law for technology that captures carbon from industrial processes could also perpetuate harm to these poor, mostly minority residents.

In Louisiana's St. James Parish, where petrochemical plants dominate the landscape, environmental justice activist Sharon Lavigne said the legislation will allow pollution from fossil fuels to keep harming her community.

"That's just like saying they're going to continue to poison us, going to continue to cause us cancer," said Lavigne, a former high school teacher who founded the group Rising St. James.

The leasing provisions mark a failure in efforts by environmentalists and social justice advocates to impose a nationwide leasing ban. The movement's high point came when Biden followed campaign pledges to end new drilling on federal lands with an order his first week in office suspending lease sales.

U.S. District Judge Terry Doughty in Lake Charles, Louisiana blocked Biden's order nationwide last year. A federal appeals court Wednesday struck down Doughty's ruling, then Thursday he issued a new injunction saying lease sales can't be stopped in the 13 states that opposed Biden's policy.

A stream of potential drilling sites is crucial for companies to maintain future production because wells can take years to develop and some yield nothing, said Jim Noe, an industry lobbyist who worked with Senate staff on the climate bill's leasing provisions.

"The industry is in constant need — almost like a treadmill — of lease sales," said Noe, an attorney at Holland & Knight who represented offshore oil and gas companies. Noe said demand for oil and gas won't decline immediately and Gulf drilling brings jobs and more energy security.

A United Nations report before Biden took office warned that the U.S. and other nations need to sharply decrease investments in oil, gas and coal to keep temperatures from rising more than 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) since pre-industrial times.

Other bill provisions that focus on renewable energy and capturing carbon dioxide from industrial plants would result in net emission reductions 10 to 50 times greater than emission increases from burning more oil and gas, analysts say.

The increase in oil and gas emissions still could be substantial — as much as 77 million to 110 million tons (70 to 100 million metric tons) of additional carbon dioxide annually by 2030 from new leasing, according to economist Brian Prest with the research group Resources for the Future.

Other experts had lower projections: The San Francisco-based climate research group Energy Innovation predicted up to 55 million tons (50 million metric tons) of additional carbon dioxide annually from new leasing. Researchers from Princeton and Dartmouth said the impact could be negligible or as much as 22 million tons (20 million metric tons) in the U.S., plus much more abroad.

Any increase hinges on global oil and natural gas prices staying high — and that in turn depends on a range of factors including the ongoing war in Ukraine, said Robbie Orvis with Energy Innovation.

“It may increase oil and gas production somewhat, but that is very much offset by all of the other pieces of the bill,” Orvis said.

Yet there's uncertainty about how quickly other pieces of the bill could bring emission cuts. Wind and solar construction could run into the supply chain problems hindering many economic sectors. And technology to capture and store carbon dioxide is still being refined and is in limited use.

Other provisions could make it potentially more expensive to drill on public lands and waters. There are modest increases in royalty and rental rates and a new \$5-per-acre fee when companies want particular parcels offered for lease. Another fee would require companies to pay for natural gas, or methane, that enters the atmosphere as a potent greenhouse gas.

The higher costs could dampen interest among companies, said Mark Squillace, a natural resources law professor at University of Colorado Law School.

“Even though the industry is going to be getting more oil and gas leasing if they want it, it's an interesting question: Do they want it?” Squillace asked.

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HEADLINE	08/18 High-level talks in Ukraine yield little
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zelenskyy-host-lviv-talks-chief-turkish-leader-88531186
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine -- Turkey's leader and the U.N. chief met in Ukraine with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday in a high-powered bid to ratchet down a war raging for nearly six months. But little immediate progress was reported.</p> <p>Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he would follow up with Russian President Vladimir Putin, given that most of the matters discussed would require the Kremlin's agreement.</p> <p>With the meetings held at such a high level — it was the first visit to Ukraine by Erdogan since the war began, and the second by U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres — some had hoped for breakthroughs, if not toward an overall peace, then at least on specific issues. But none was apparent.</p> <p>Meeting in the western city of Lviv, far from the front lines, the leaders discussed expanding exchanges of prisoners of war and arranging for U.N. atomic energy experts to visit and help secure Europe's biggest nuclear power plant, which is in the middle of fierce fighting that has raised fears of catastrophe.</p> <p>Erdogan has positioned himself as a go-between in efforts to stop the fighting. While Turkey is a member of NATO, its wobbly economy is reliant on Russia for trade, and it has tried to steer a middle course between the two combatants.</p> <p>The Turkish president urged the international community after the talks not to abandon diplomatic efforts to end the war that has killed tens of thousands and forced more than 10 million Ukrainians from their homes.</p>

He repeated that Turkey is willing to act as “mediator and facilitator” and added, “I remain convinced that the war will end at the negotiating table.”

In March, Turkey hosted talks in Istanbul between Russian and Ukrainian negotiators that failed to end the hostilities.

On the battlefield, meanwhile, at least 17 people were killed overnight in heavy Russian missile strikes on Ukraine’s Kharkiv region, Ukrainian authorities said Thursday.

Russia's military claimed that it struck a base for foreign mercenaries in Kharkiv, killing 90. There was no immediate comment from the Ukrainian side.

In the latest incident on Russian soil near the border with Ukraine, an ammunition dump caught fire in a village in the Belgorod region, the regional governor said. No casualties were reported. Video posted online, whose authenticity couldn’t be verified, showed orange flames and black smoke, with the sound of multiple explosions.

Elsewhere, Russian officials reported that anti-aircraft defenses shot down drones in the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula at Kerch and near the Belbek airfield in the Black Sea port of Sevastopol. Explosions in recent weeks on the peninsula have destroyed warplanes and caused other damage at military airfields.

Heightening international tensions, Russia deployed warplanes carrying state-of-the-art hypersonic missiles to its Kaliningrad region, an enclave surrounded by NATO members Lithuania and Poland.

One major topic at the talks in Lviv was the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine. Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of shelling the complex.

Condemning the Kremlin for what he called “nuclear blackmail,” Zelenskyy demanded that Russian troops leave the plant and that a team from the U.N.’s International Atomic Energy Agency be allowed in.

“The area needs to be demilitarized, and we must tell it as it is: Any potential damage in Zaporizhzhia is suicide,” Guterres said at a news conference.

Erdogan likewise expressed concern over the fighting around the plant, saying, “We don’t want to experience another Chernobyl” — a reference to the world’s worst nuclear accident, in Ukraine in 1986.

Zelenskyy and the U.N. chief agreed Thursday on arrangements for an IAEA mission to the plant, according to the president's website. But it was not immediately clear whether the Kremlin would consent to the terms. As for a pullout of troops, a Russian Foreign Ministry official said earlier that that would leave the plant “vulnerable.”

Fears mounted Thursday when Russian and Ukrainian authorities accused each other of plotting to attack the site and then blame the other side. Late Thursday, multiple rounds of Ukrainian shelling struck the city in which the power plant is located, a Russian official reported.

Guterres used the talks in Lviv to name Gen. Carlos dos Santos Cruz of Brazil to lead a previously announced U.N. fact-finding mission to the Olenivka prison where 53 Ukrainian POWs were killed in an explosion in July. Russia and Ukraine have blamed each other for the blast.

Also on the agenda Thursday: an increase in grain exports. Earlier this summer, the U.N. and Turkey brokered an agreement clearing the way for Ukraine to export 22 million tons of corn and other grain stuck in its Black Sea ports since the Russian invasion.

	<p>The blockage has worsened world food shortages, driven up prices and heightened fears of famine, especially in Africa. Yet even with the deal, only a trickle of Ukrainian grain has made it out — some 600,000 tons by Turkey's estimate.</p> <p>Zelenskyy said Thursday that he proposed expanding the shipments. Guterres, for his part, touted the operation's success but added, "There is a long way to go before this will be translated into the daily life of people at their local bakery and in their markets."</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Moldova plagued by bomb threats
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/bomb-threats-put-tiny-moldova-ukraines-neighbor-edge-88583179
GIST	<p>CHISINAU, Moldova -- For tiny Moldova, an impoverished, landlocked nation that borders war-torn Ukraine but isn't in the European Union or NATO, it's been another week plagued by bomb threats.</p> <p>On an overcast day outside the international airport serving Moldova's capital of Chisinau, hundreds of people lined up this week as bomb-sniffing dogs examined the vicinity. That's now a common scene in Europe's poorest nation as it battles what observers believe are attempts to destabilize the former Soviet republic amid Russia's war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Since the beginning of July, Moldova has received nearly 60 bomb threats — with more than 15 reported so far this week — at locations ranging from the capital's city hall, to the airport, the supreme court, shopping malls and hospitals.</p> <p>While no one has yet been charged for the bomb threats, most of which have arrived via email and all of which have turned out to be false, officials say they have traced computer addresses to Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.</p> <p>"It is part of the disinformation war against Moldova, which is ongoing," said Valeriu Pasa, an analyst at the Chisinau think tank Watchdog.md. "It could be part of the Russian effort to destabilize Moldova, as they use many different methods to do so."</p> <p>Since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, Moldova, which has a population of 2.6 million people, has faced a multitude of crises. It has received more Ukrainian refugees per capita than any other country; tensions have soared in the country's Russia-backed breakaway region; it is dealing with an acute energy crisis; and like much of Europe it is battling skyrocketing inflation.</p> <p>The frequent bomb threats are only adding pressure to the country's already overstretched authorities.</p> <p>"It blocks a lot of the resources — police, investigators, technical services — it's a type of bullying I would say, or harassment, of Moldovan state systems and public services," Pasa said.</p> <p>Maxim Motinga, a prosecutor from Moldova's Office for Combating Organized Crime, told The Associated Press that since the bomb threats started "practically every day we open criminal cases."</p> <p>"At the moment, all criminal investigations are ongoing," he said, adding that requests have been made for official assistance from Russia and Ukraine if "certain tracks leading to the respective countries were established."</p> <p>"I hope we get some answers from those countries," he said.</p> <p>For Veaceslav Belbas, a 43-year-old Moldovan businessman returning from Turkey to Chisinau on Monday, a bomb threat left him frightened as his plane circled the capital's airport for 30 minutes. After that, the plane did a U-turn and went back to Turkey.</p>

“We prayed a lot and finally landed,” he said. “For me, it was such a big shock that I told my wife that this is my last flight.”

Tensions in Moldova soared in April after a series of actual explosions occurred in the Russia-backed breakaway region of Transnistria, where Russia bases about 1,500 troops in a so-called frozen conflict zone. It raised fears that non-NATO, militarily neutral Moldova could get dragged into Russia’s war orbit. At least one Russian official has spoken openly of snatching enough land in southern Ukraine to link up Russian-controlled areas from the mainland to Transnistria.

Observers pointed out that the blasts came as Moldova — which has historically close ties with Moscow — showed a growing Western orientation and after it had applied to join the EU, which it did shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine. It was granted EU candidate status in late June, shortly before the bomb threats started.

Since Moldova gained independence in 1991, it has been plagued by organized crime and official corruption. After an election in 2019, a local oligarch attempted to seize power, which triggered mass protests before he fled the country. In 2014, several politicians and oligarchs had alleged ties to a scam in which \$1 billion vanished from local banks. No one has yet been convicted in that case.

Galina Gheorghes was returning to England from Moldova last month after attending a family get-together when a bomb threat canceled her flight. She says she is angry that no one has yet been caught.

“It is very bad what’s happening ... unfortunately, the ordinary people suffer,” the 35-year-old Gheorghes said.

Amid a seemingly endless pattern of disruptive and costly threats, Moldova’s Internal Ministry said it wants to toughen punishments for anyone convicted of false bomb alerts by ramping up fines and handing out lengthier prison sentences.

Chisinau Airport has been hit by dozens of bomb threats since July and has bolstered security in response. Radu Zanoaga, head of border police at the airport, says a specialist unit has been established to save security officials the trouble of traveling in from the city center each time a bomb threat is made.

“At the moment, we are dealing with the situation in cooperation with other (state) bodies and institutions that operate within the airport,” he said. “There have been bomb alerts before — but not as many and not as frequent as now.”

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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	08/18 Uncovering, reporting extremist threats
SOURCE	https://www.wftv.com/news/local/investigative-researchers-give-inside-look-how-they-uncover-report-extremist-threats/J3ZKRUDWWRDLPXRFVGVVAPTKYE/
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON, D.C. — Researchers are monitoring online extremist spaces for threats to law enforcement in the wake of the search of Mar-a-Lago.</p> <p>Investigators said they are on alert after the FBI and Department of Homeland Security issued a warning about these threats. Government and civilian examiners are ready to act.</p> <p>A regular day for Ben Popp includes combing the Internet for videos and threats. He’s an investigative researcher for the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism.</p>

He looks for posts, comments, videos and audio in extremist online spaces and on social media. The ADL's researchers recently examined a threatening voicemail California Congressman Eric Swalwell said someone left for him. It mentioned violence against Swalwell's wife and children.

It is not an easy job.

"I almost have to take off my normal person hat and put on my researcher hat when I enter these online spaces because that's the only way to stay sane when you're seeing such clear hate online," Popp said.

The FBI explained increasingly, lawmakers and law enforcement are targets of these kinds of threats. Officials on both sides of the aisle have condemned this kind of intimidation.

"I will not standby silently when their integrity is unfairly attacked," Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a press conference.

Popp said they regularly see language he'd describe as distrustful of government, but since [the search of Mar-a-Lago, it's become outwardly violent](#).

"All we can do now is just continue to monitor these spaces and be ready to act if anything does happen," he said.

It can be difficult to differentiate between rhetoric and someone who might act, according to Popp.

"I'd say it's definitely more of an art than a science in determining how to treat each case," he said. "It's pretty much a case-by-case basis how we can either move forward with law enforcement or logging the comment and being prepared to share information if that does become necessary."

Popp explained the ADL has a good working relationship with law enforcement.

"We need to hold people accountable for their comments and actions in any way that we can legally and socially," he said.

The past illustrates how important this work is, according to Popp.

"January 6th demonstrated that these sort of hateful comments and violent narratives that are spreading online can lead to in-person political violence and that is a cause for concern and a reason that we should continue to monitor these spaces," he added.

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HEADLINE	08/18 Cyber Command 'hunt forward' Croatia
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/cyber-command-deployed-hunt-forward-defenders-to-croatia-to-help-secure-systems/
GIST	<p>U.S. Cyber Command recently sent a team of "elite defensive cyber operators" to Croatia for the first time as part of its hunt forward operations aimed at collecting information on adversary activity and strengthening partner cyber defenses.</p> <p>The effort, which brought together experts from the Croatian Security and Intelligence Agency's (SOA) Cyber Security Centre as well as U.S. military and civilian personnel, comes at a time when countries in Central and Eastern Europe are on high alert for cyberattacks linked to the war between Russia and Ukraine. Government agencies and businesses in Lithuania, Romania, Latvia and elsewhere have been pummeled by pro-Kremlin hackers in recent months, and European Union leaders have warned of potential "spillover effects" from such attacks.</p> <p>In May, SOA Director Daniel Markić accused Russia of stepping up its cyberattacks against Croatia, adding that recent attacks had targeted ministries and the country's tax administration.</p>

“This kind of partnership in cybersecurity is essential in today’s world as it expands our reach and capabilities,” Markić said in a press release shared by Cyber Command. “We face the same adversaries and threat actors in cyberspace, and we both gain and share valuable insights into cyber resilience as it has become the key objective for national security.”

Although Cyber Command did not explicitly say that the Croatia operation was tied to the war in Ukraine, a top official told reporters in May that it was prioritizing certain hunt forward missions based on Russia-linked threats.

“Our deployment in Lithuania was directly related to the ongoing crisis in the Ukraine,” Maj. Gen. William Hartman, commander of the Cyber National Mission Force, [told reporters](#) at the Vanderbilt University’s Summit on Modern Conflicts and Emerging Threats. “Clearly the Russians are a threat to the Baltic states and other organizations in the near abroad. The Lithuania hunt was moved up in the queue, based on that threat.”

Cyber Command over the last four years has conducted 35 hunt forward operations in 18 countries, including Estonia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Ukraine.

Cyber Command and National Security Agency chief Gen. Paul Nakasone told senators in April that the elite hacking force “stepped up an already high operational tempo” after Russia invaded Ukraine in February, and has been conducting additional hunt forward operations — including one in Ukraine — to identify network vulnerabilities.

In addition to threats from Russian government hackers, pro-Kremlin volunteer gangs have targeted a wide range of EU governments and companies in recent months in retaliation for supporting Ukraine. The Killnet group in particular took credit for a [June attack](#) on several Lithuanian government institutions, an April attack [against websites](#) owned by government agencies and a bank in Romania, a May attack on websites of [Italy’s parliament](#), military and National Health Institute, as well as several other incidents.

The hunt forward operation announced Thursday isn’t the first time that the U.S. has aided Croatia’s cybersecurity efforts. In 2020, the U.S. provided \$4.2 million in [special assistance](#) to help Croatia establish a new cyber security operations centre in Zagreb. The funds went towards equipment, training, and technology to prevent cyber intrusions and defend the Croatian military, the U.S. embassy in Zagreb said.

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HEADLINE	08/18 More watch streaming than cable: first time
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2022/08/for-the-first-time-ever-more-people-watched-streaming-tv-than-cable/
GIST	<p>A new report from market measurement firm Nielsen says that for the first time, TV viewers watched more on streaming services like Netflix and Disney+ than they did on cable TV, making streaming the most popular way to consume content.</p> <p>The shift has been predicted by analysts and commentators for years, but it has only now come to fruition. Streaming had previously outpaced over-the-air broadcast TV, but cable was still beating it until July.</p> <p>In July, streaming accounted for 34.8 percent of audiences' TV viewing. The runner-up was the now-dethroned cable TV, which came up narrowly behind at 34.4 percent. The relatively distant third was broadcast at 21.6 percent.</p> <p>Streaming was up 22.6 percent compared to July of 2021, and audiences streamed an average of 190.9 billion minutes per week. Nielsen points out that this is substantially more than a previously publicized streaming number: 169.9 billion minutes in April of 2020, one of the most locked-down months of the pandemic.</p>

	<p>All that said, the shift could be attributed as much to a lack of new content—especially sports programming—on cable in July as to the growth of streaming. Streaming services have been pumping out new content as fast as ever, while cable channels have slowed down for the summer. There is also much more streaming content than there used to be, thanks to new service launches like Peacock and Paramount+ over the past few years.</p> <p>Nielsen notes that overall TV viewership hasn't changed much—just the relative size of each slice of the pie. In other words, people aren't watching more TV; they're watching the same amount of TV but in different ways.</p> <p>The report also outlined the relative performance of different popular streaming platforms. The biggest category was the catch-all "other streaming" at 10.2 percent of the streaming pie, but Netflix was the top single service at 8 percent. It was followed by YouTube at 7.3 percent, Hulu at 3.6 percent, Amazon Prime Video at 3 percent, Disney+ at 1.8 percent, and HBO Max at one percent.</p> <p>Finally, it's worth mentioning that Nielsen is tracking data from viewing on actual TVs. This data does not include mobile or desktop viewing, which would likely boost streaming even further.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Cyber Command faces talent shortage
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/military-rotation-norms-challenge-cyber-command/
GIST	<p>U.S. Cyber Command lost yet another seasoned leader earlier this month.</p> <p>Lt. Gen. Charles “Tuna” Moore, second in command behind Gen. Paul Nakasone, retired after serving roughly five years at Cyber Command. By all accounts, he was an effective, impressive figure, having completed a Harvard Kennedy School cybersecurity program in 2019 and advancing through the ranks to help oversee the military’s primary digital warfare unit at an increasingly critical time for cyber defenses.</p> <p>But even for a talented military service member in his 50s, working inside a part of the military that White House officials, Pentagon leaders and lawmakers say is dangerously understaffed, longstanding policies and a military staffing system makes it nearly impossible to remain.</p> <p>There is “no seat for him,” sources said, pointing out that Moore is just the latest example in a long line of forced retirements where top generals who aren’t promoted “reach the end of the line.”</p> <p>But at a time when General Nakasone along with many other cybersecurity leaders inside and out of the government are sounding alarms about the dire cybersecurity talent shortage and the inability to retain the most skilled cyber practitioners, many former Cyber Command and National Security Agency officials say it is time to change the military’s rotation system and approach to retirement that is robbing the military of its most experienced personnel.</p> <p>Department of Defense staffing norms require staff to rotate every few years. Since Cyber Command receives talent from outside its ranks, it is also subject to the whims of the various military services, which rotate their brightest people to Cyber Command for anywhere from two to four years, asking for them back, experts and former officials say, just when they have mastered the complexities of the cyber mission.</p> <p>The services — Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard — say they have manpower needs that require they get their talent back, sources said. But as a result, Cyber Command officials are left to execute cyber operations with a constantly rotating bench.</p> <p>“What that means in cyberspace is by the time someone is just getting up to speed, it’s time for them to leave,” said Rick Ledgett, who was deputy director and acting chief operating officer of the NSA until he retired in 2017. “That hurts the cyber mission.”</p>

The NSA and Cyber Command work very closely; General Paul Nakasone has a “dual hat,” meaning he runs both entities. Ledgett, who worked with Nakasone and the founding director of Cyber Command, retired Gen. Keith Alexander, said that Alexander tried to fix the rotation problem but was unsuccessful.

Alexander declined to speak with CyberScoop.

Congress poised to act

The issue is a long-standing one. Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D., a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and chairman of the Cybersecurity Subcommittee, in 2018 told a joint Cybersecurity and Personnel Subcommittee hearing that Congress needed to review the cyber operational readiness of the DOD.

“A great deal of the department’s cyber readiness issues revolve around the shortage of skilled, cyber-capable personnel,” Rounds said. “An ongoing concern of the subcommittee, which I am sure the department shares, is that we preempt a hollow cyber force ... [Cyber Command](#) needs the indigenous capability, without over-reliance on NSA, to surveil adversary networks for zero-day vulnerabilities, produce malware to exploit these vulnerabilities and implant this malware within a reasonable and realistic timeline.”

Five years later and it’s unclear if much has changed. In April, [Nakasone](#) told Congress a top priority for him is to build a skilled workforce “through recruitment, training and retention.”

But Congress seems to have the issue on its radar. [The Senate version of the National Defense Authorization Act](#) this year calls for the Secretary of Defense to complete a study on the responsibilities of the military services for “organizing, training, and presenting the total force” to Cyber Command.

DOD Secretary Lloyd Austin is charged with producing a report by next June that addresses the “low service retention rate” for critical roles inside the Cyberspace Operations Forces “specifically addressing Cyber Mission Force rotations [and] length of service commitments.”

For those who have worked at the NSA and partnered with Cyber Command, the problem feels particularly acute. Gavin Wilde was at the NSA as a Russian specialist and worked closely with Cyber Command as part of the “Russia Small Group” in both 2018 and 2020. Cyber Command was at a sharp disadvantage because of the constant rotations, he said.

“The current practice of either rotating out or retiring military members or generals, general officers, at the very moment when they’re reaching critical mass of expertise is problematic for both the discipline as well as for getting Cyber Command to a place of maturity where it’s not reliant on NSA or others to help them with that expertise,” Wilde said.

The dynamic is a “drag on the talent shortage at NSA,” he said. Many new employees at the NSA are coming out of graduate programs, eager to begin working in their area of expertise only to find “themselves having to educate their peers in Cyber Command who haven’t had that benefit, and who by the time they catch up or reach parity, are rotating out,” Wilde said.

How to fix the problem

There are ways that Cyber Command could address the issue even without permission from the services. The military has authority to direct commission cyber officers for several years, but has rarely done so, said Sean Plankey, who worked for Cyber Command before ending up at the White House and the Department of Energy with cybersecurity portfolios.

“They only used it at the lowest possible level of commissioning and so, they’re struggling to bring people in and the military itself functions on a up or out system,” Plankey said. “That means you have to get promoted or in a period of time you get pushed out, and you can’t get promoted.”

Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery, the former executive director of the Cyberspace Solarium Commission and before that a staffer on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the rotation problem could be overcome if the military created a Cyber Force akin to the Space Force launched in December 2019.

A Cyber Force would require Congressional intervention to create and was much more needed than a Space Force, Montgomery said. He worries a Cyber Force cannot be created anytime soon because the Space Force is still new.

Absent a Cyber Force, which would solve the problem by making cyber its own service not dependent on the others for staffing, DOD should accommodate longer tours and consistent tours within certain parts of the cyber mission force, including Cyber Command, Montgomery added.

“This is absolutely something the services should be addressing This is a career path that requires persistent training and exposure to the cyber infrastructure,” he said, pointing out that enlisted personnel working on nuclear power plants do not rotate because of the complexity of the mission.

A staffing system that’s an outgrowth of deep-seated cultural issues

A former high-ranking Cyber Command official who spoke only on the condition of anonymity said that the debates about how to staff special commands like Cyber Command go back to 1987 when the Special Operations Command was created and poached top talent from the various services. When Cyber Command formed with plans to rotate officers from the services “some of the knives came out because there were people still pissed off about SOCOM and how that got stood up,” he said.

The main problem with the rotation system is that it not only robs Cyber Command of talent, but also often leads to experienced people leaving the service. If they are rotated out of an operational role on a national force to sit on a ship, they decide to retire, former officials said.

“They’re going back to another unit that doesn’t know how to employ their talents right or where they don’t feel enabled to bring all of that experience,” said a second former Cyber Command official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the press. “Invariably what happens is those people get out because they seek that same high performing organization [that they had at Cyber Command] . . . so they go join a startup.”

Despite the flaws to the current system, it’s difficult to fix, said Gary Brown, a professor at the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy and a military expert.

“The military rotation thing essentially affects the entire system so you can’t really pull one career field out of the system and expect the system to still work because there are certain boxes you have to check to be competitive for promotion,” Brown said, before adding that the military requires leaders to get promoted to stay.

For those who are passed over, Brown said, “then you’re going to be kicked out, even if you wanted to stay, which is kind of wild in this case, because we’re desperate for people but we just don’t have that much of a system to stay It’s a difficult system.”

U.S. Cyber Command and the Defense Department declined to comment for this story.

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HEADLINE	08/19 China RedAlpha targets govt. entities
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/chinese-cyberspy-group-redalpha-targeting-governments-humanitarian-entities
GIST	For the past three years, Chinese state-sponsored cyberespionage group RedAlpha has been observed targeting numerous government organizations, humanitarian entities, and think tanks.

Also tracked as Deepcliff and Red Dev 3, the advanced persistent threat (APT) actor has been active since at least 2015, focused on intelligence collection, including the [surveillance of ethnic and religious minorities](#), such as the Tibetan and Uyghur communities.

Since 2018, [RedAlpha](#) has been registering hundreds of domains spoofing global government, think tank, and humanitarian organizations, including Amnesty International, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS), and Radio Free Asia (RFA), cybersecurity company Recorded Future reports.

The attacks, Recorded Future notes, fall in line with previously observed RedAlpha targeting of entities of interest to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Organizations in Taiwan were also targeted, likely for intelligence collection.

The purpose of the campaign has been the harvesting of credentials from the targeted individuals and organizations, to gain access to their email and other communication accounts.

“RedAlpha’s humanitarian and human rights-linked targeting and spoofing of organizations such as Amnesty International and FIDH is particularly concerning given the CCP’s reported human rights abuses in relation to Uyghurs, Tibetans, and other ethnic and religious minority groups in China,” Recorded Future notes.

The cyberespionage group is known for the use of weaponized websites – which imitate well-known email service providers or specific organizations – as part of its credential-theft campaigns, but last year saw a spike in newly registered domains by the APT, at more than 350.

Characteristic to this activity was the use of resellerclub[.]com nameservers, the use of virtual private server (VPS) hosting provider Virtual Machine Solutions LLC (VirMach), overlapping WHOIS registrant information (including names, email addresses, and phone numbers), consistent domain naming conventions, and the use of specific server-side components.

The group has registered hundreds of domains typosquatting major email and storage service providers – including Yahoo (135 domains), Google (91), and Microsoft (70) – but also domains typosquatting the ministries of foreign affairs (MOFAs) in multiple countries, the Purdue University, Taiwan’s Democratic Progressive Party, as well as the aforementioned and other global government, think tank, and humanitarian organizations.

During the first half of 2021, the cyberespionage group registered at least 16 domains spoofing the Berlin-based non-profit organization MERICS, activity that coincided with the Chinese MOFA imposing sanctions on the think tank.

“In many cases, observed phishing pages mirrored legitimate email login portals for the specific organizations named above. We suspect that this means they were intended to target individuals directly affiliated with these organizations rather than simply imitating these organizations to target other third parties,” Recorded Future says.

Over the past three years, RedAlpha also showed constant focus on targeting Taiwanese entities, including through multiple domains imitating the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), the de facto embassy of the United States of America in Taiwan.

The hacking group was also observed expanding its campaigns to target Brazilian, Portuguese, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese MOFAs, along with India’s National Informatics Centre (NIC).

“We identified multiple overlaps with previous publicly reported RedAlpha campaigns that allowed us to assess this is very likely a continuation of the group’s activity. Of note, in at least 5 instances the group appeared to re-register previously owned domains after expiry,” Recorded Future notes.

	<p>The cybersecurity company has identified a link between RedAlpha and a Chinese information security company – email addresses used to register spoofing domains appear in job listings and other web pages associated with the organization – and believes that the threat actor is operating out of China</p> <p>“The group’s targeting closely aligns with the strategic interests of the Chinese government, such as the observed emphasis on China-focused think tanks, civil society organizations, and Taiwanese government and political entities. This targeting, coupled with the identification of likely China-based operators, indicates a likely Chinese state-nexus to RedAlpha activity,” Recorded Future concludes.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/19 Estonia repels massive cyberattack
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/estonia-repels-biggest-cyberattack/
GIST	<p>The Estonian government has revealed that the country was on the receiving end of the “most extensive” DDoS attacks in 15 years this week after angering Moscow.</p> <p>The former Soviet state reportedly removed a Red Army monument from Tallin square this week, while a Soviet-era tank was removed in the eastern city of Narva. The government has pledged to take down hundreds of such monuments by the end of the year following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>In response, pro-Russian cybercrime group Killnet has reportedly claimed responsibility for launching a series of DDoS attacks against the websites of public and private sector organizations.</p> <p>Estonian government CIO, Luukas Ilves, took to Twitter to dismiss the group’s claims that more than 200 sites had been flooded.</p> <p>“The attacks were ineffective. E-Estonia is up and running. Services were not disrupted. With some brief and minor exceptions, websites remained fully available throughout the day. The attack has gone largely unnoticed in Estonia,” he said.</p> <p>“As Government CIO, I slept well.”</p> <p>Interestingly, reports suggest that the DDoS attempts came alongside a fake news blitz from Russian media suggesting Soviet war graves were being destroyed by the Estonian government. This apparently resulted in rioting by ethnic Russians in the country.</p> <p>The cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007 are often described as a watershed moment in offensive nation state activity.</p> <p>The campaign lasted for weeks, severely disrupting the country’s e-government services and other sectors including banking and media. Those attacks were also precipitated by the removal of a memorial to the Soviet Red Army.</p> <p>However, the incident also spurred the government to double down on cybersecurity, and now it is regarded as having one of the strongest defensive postures of any global government.</p> <p>The country is ranked third in the ITU Global Cybersecurity Index 2020 and has a 17 percentage point lead over the European average according to the National Cyber Security Index (NCSI).</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 LockBit claims attack security giant Entrust
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/lockbit-claims-ransomware-attack-on-security-giant-entrust/
GIST	The LockBit ransomware gang has claimed responsibility for the June cyberattack on digital security giant Entrust.

Last month, BleepingComputer broke the story that Entrust suffered a ransomware attack on June 18th, 2022.

Starting in early June, Entrust had begun to tell customers that they suffered a cyberattack where data was stolen from internal systems.

"We have determined that some files were taken from our internal systems," Entrust shared in a security notification to customers.

"As we continue to investigate the issue, we will contact you directly if we learn information that we believe would affect the security of the products and services we provide to your organization."

While Entrust would not share any details regarding the attack or confirm if it was ransomware, they told BleepingComputer that they were investigating the incident.

"While our investigation is ongoing, we have found no indication to date that the issue has affected the operation or security of our products and services, which are run in separate, air-gapped environments from our internal systems and are fully operational," Entrust told BleepingComputer.

However, AdvIntel CEO Vitali Kremetz told BleepingComputer at the time that a well-known ransomware gang had attacked Entrust after purchasing access to the corporate network through "network access sellers."

LockBit claims attack on Entrust

Today, security researcher Dominic Alvieri told BleepingComputer that LockBit had created a dedicated data leak page for Entrust on their website, stating that they would publish all of the stolen data tomorrow evening.

When ransomware gangs publish data on their data leak sites, they usually leak data over time to scare the victim into returning to the negotiation table.

As LockBit states that they will publish all data, it indicates that Entrust has not negotiated with the ransomware operation or refuses to give in to their demands.

BleepingComputer has reached out to Entrust for further confirmation on the LockBit attack but has not heard back at this time.

However, LockBit claiming of the attack supports what sources had previously told BleepingComputer about who was responsible.

LockBit is considered one of the most active ransomware operations at this time, with its public-facing operation 'LockBitSupp' actively engaging with threat actors and cybersecurity researchers.

In June, LockBit 3.0 was released with new encryptors based on the BlackMatter source code, new payment options, new extortion strategies, and the first ransomware bug bounty program.

Due to its ongoing adoption of new tactics, technology, and payment methods, it is vital for security and network professionals to stay up to date on the evolution of the operation and its TTPs.

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HEADLINE	08/18 APT41: 4 campaigns, 13 victims, new tools
SOURCE	https://www.helpnetsecurity.com/2022/08/18/apt41-group/?web_view=true
GIST	Group-IB has released new research on the state-sponsored hacker group APT41. The Group-IB Threat Intelligence team estimates that in 2021 the threat actors gained access to at least 13 organizations

worldwide. While analyzing the group's malicious campaigns, experts uncovered adversary techniques and artifacts left by the attackers that point to their origin.

APT41 group activity

The state-sponsored attacker group APT41 (aka ARIUM, Winnti, LEAD, WICKED SPIDER, WICKED PANDA, Blackfly, Suckfly, Winnti Umbrella, Double Dragon), whose goals are cyber espionage and financial gain, has been active since at least 2007.

Group-IB Threat Intelligence analysts identified four APT41 malware campaigns carried out in 2021 that were geographically spread across the United States, Taiwan, India, Vietnam, and China. The targeted industries included the public sector, manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, hospitality, education, as well as the media and aviation. According to Group-IB, there were 13 confirmed victims of APT41 in 2021, but the actual number could be much higher.

In the investigated campaigns, the group used the following reconnaissance tools: Acunetix, Nmap, SQLmap, OneForAll, subdomain3, subDomainsBrute, and Sublist3r.

APT41 members usually use phishing, exploit various vulnerabilities (including [Proxylogon](#)), and conduct watering hole or supply-chain attacks to initially compromise their victims. However, in the recent campaigns examined by Group-IB, the attackers performed SQL injections on websites using the publicly available tool SQLmap as the initial attack vector.

In some organizations, the group gained access to the command shell of the targeted server, while in others they accessed databases with information about existing accounts, lists of employees, and plaintext and hashed passwords. The SQL injections enabled the threat actors to infiltrate victim networks in half of the cases: 43 out of 86 websites turned out to be vulnerable.

Cobalt Strike: old but gold

Group-IB established that the group used a unique method of dividing a payload (a custom Cobalt Strike Beacon) in order to download malicious code to target devices and execute it. Once the payload was compiled, it was encoded in Base64 and then divided into chunks of 775 characters and added to a text file using a certain command.

In one of the observed cases, in order to write the entire payload to a file, the threat actors needed to repeat this action 154 times. The same atypical method of dividing the payload was observed in the network belonging to another organization, where the threat actors divided the code into chunks of 1,024 characters. To write the payload fully, in this case they needed 128 iterations.

Group-IB researchers emphasize that the group usually used certain servers exclusively to host the Cobalt Strike framework, while they exploited others only for active scanning through Acunetix. The team identified servers that were used for both, however. "Despite the servers being protected with the cloud service Cloudflare, which hides the real server addresses, the Group-IB Threat Intelligence system detected APT41 server backends, which helped monitor the group's malicious infrastructure and quickly block their servers," a Group-IB specialist said.

A noteworthy finding by Group-IB related to Cobalt Strike is the use of listeners with custom SSL certificates. Listeners are used for accepting connections from the payload in order to maintain communication between bots and the C&C server. In the cases examined, APT41 used unique SSL certificates that mimicked "Microsoft", "Facebook" and "Cloudflare".

According to Group-IB, servers with such certificates first emerged in early 2020. By the end of 2021, their number reached 106. The team identified more than 100 Cobalt Strike servers that are used only by APT41. Most are no longer active.

Working on a schedule

	<p>Research into APT41 malware campaigns from 2021 helped Group-IB Threat Intelligence analysts align all the group's timestamps to UTC+8. As a result, they have come to the following conclusions. The group starts working at 9 AM and its activity stops around 7 PM. There are several countries in the attacker's time zone, including China, Malaysia, Singapore, parts of Russia, and Australia.</p> <p>Regarding threat actor attribution, the report provides a list of mostly Chinese IP addresses used to communicate with Cobalt Strike servers. The experts also noted the use of Chinese characters on the devices from which the attacks were conducted. Interestingly, the researchers noticed a specific Pinyin format being used to name directories. Pinyin is a romanization system that represents the sounds of the Chinese language using the Latin alphabet.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 APT ramps up attacks on travel sector 2022
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/threat-group-rampsup-attacks-on/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Researchers have revealed new details of a prolific APT group which has used 15 malware families over the past four years to steal data from travel and hospitality companies.</p> <p>Financially motivated, group TA558 targets mainly organizations in Latin America and sometimes North America and Western Europe, switching between Portuguese, Spanish and English as it does so, according to Proofpoint.</p> <p>It primarily uses phishing emails as its access vector, deploying reservation-themed lures with content relevant to the victim organization such as hotel room bookings.</p> <p>These emails contain either malicious links or attachments designed to covertly install malware, which will then enable reconnaissance, data theft and the download of additional payloads, the report explained.</p> <p>Among the multiple malware types used by the group are Loda RAT, Vjw0rm, Revenge RAT and AsyncRAT.</p> <p>TA558 uses its own infrastructure most of the time, although Proofpoint has seen it leverage compromised hotel websites to host malicious payloads in a bid to fly under the radar of security monitoring tools.</p> <p>Although the group has been operational since 2018, they have “significantly” increased their campaign tempo in 2022, Proofpoint warned.</p> <p>Like many threat groups, TA558 has quickly adapted to Microsoft's decision over recent months to disable macros by default in Office products, using container files like RAR and ISO attachments instead of macro-enabled Office docs.</p> <p>“Additionally, TA558 began using URLs more frequently in 2022. TA558 conducted 27 campaigns with URLs in 2022, compared to just five campaigns total from 2018 through 2021. Typically, URLs led to container files such as ISOs or zip files containing executables,” the report noted.</p> <p>“The malware used by TA558 can steal data including hotel customer user and credit card data, allow lateral movement, and deliver follow-on payloads.”</p> <p>That makes it a serious threat for organizations in the travel, hotel, and hospitality sectors where data breaches can cause significant financial and reputational damage.</p> <p>Marriott International was fined over £18m after hundreds of millions of guest records were stolen by threat actors following a 2014 cyber-attack on Starwood Hotels, a company it subsequently acquired.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Govt. drives Russia cyberattacks Ukraine
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SOURCE	https://www.techtarget.com/searchsecurity/news/252523950/Russian-cyber-attacks-on-Ukraine-driven-by-government-groups?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Russian cyber attacks against systems in Ukraine, as part of the former's ongoing invasion attempt, have been almost entirely the work of government-backed intelligence and military agencies.</p> <p>This is according to a report from security vendor Trustwave, which said that known threat groups from the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB), Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), and the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces (GRU) are responsible for the vast majority of attacks against both critical industrial infrastructure and data networks in Ukraine. Cyber attacks against public and private sector organizations in Ukraine have increased dramatically since Russia invaded the country in late February.</p> <p>Researchers from Trustwave's SpiderLabs operation say notorious groups such as APT29, also known as "Fancy Bear," and APT28, or "Cozy Bear," are among the nation-state crews that have been breaking into Ukrainian networks and attempting to disrupt or even destroy vulnerable systems.</p> <p>Citing both its own research as well as accounts from European government agencies and other cybersecurity vendors like CrowdStrike and SentinelOne, the Trustwave team outlined a bevy of attacks and malware samples that can all be tied back to Kremlin-backed hacking groups. The attacks included a variety of data wipers, DDoS attacks and a multi-layered operation that disrupted satellite internet provider Viasat.</p> <p>"Reports from Trustwave and other security researchers show that Russian cyber attackers have maintained pressure launching a series of attacks, showing how malware has been used against organizations in Ukraine -- either to destroy or gain control over targeted systems," wrote Trustwave security research manager Pawel Knapczyk in the report.</p> <p>The report casts doubt on the prospect that the Russian government has been enlisting help from the private hacking sector, as had first been speculated. Rather than trying to enlist or conscript ordinary cybercriminals to do their dirty work, decision-makers in the Kremlin have opted to keep virtually everything in-house and use personnel from its intelligence and military units to carry out attacks.</p> <p>Karl Sigler, senior security research manager at Trustwave SpiderLabs, told TechTarget Editorial that the decision to use government agencies rather than enlist the aid of Russian cybercrime groups was likely due to the sophistication and preparation of the FSB- and GRU-backed hacking crews.</p> <p>"They already have those strong connections," Sigler said of the government hackers. "They established connections prior to the conflict, and they have that infrastructure and those channels."</p> <p>Sigler also notes that the domestic reaction to the conflict -- specifically the internet outages and shifts away from services such as Telegram -- likely made it harder for the government to identify and recruit private cybercrime actors to its cause.</p> <p>Trustwave's report found the Russian cyber attacks were largely intended to disrupt the normal operation of critical infrastructure, such as energy plants, or create havoc by wiping the data from servers on essential networks. A third category of attacks, meanwhile, focused on intelligence gathering and espionage activity by covertly installing spyware on endpoint systems.</p> <p>Among the samples collected and analyzed by the Trustwave researchers were a trio of samples employed by the Gamaredon crew, a hacking operation tied to the FSB. Two of those malware samples, HermeticWiper and IsaacWiper, functioned as destructive attacks, while the third was a ransomware infection dubbed HermeticRansom.</p> <p>Other samples included purpose-built sabotage malware for industrial control systems (ICS), including Industroyer2 from the GRU threat group known as Sandworm and credential-stealing malware known as CredoMap, deployed by the SVR's APT28.</p>

	<p>Trustwave found that, apart from the customized ICS malware, nearly all the malware samples in use were previously known hacking tools. The most significant modifications were small changes to the binaries that would allow them to temporarily evade antimalware products.</p> <p>The aim of the attacks has evolved over the course of the war. Sigler explained that as the Ukraine conflict drags on far longer than the Kremlin anticipated, the tactics of Russian hackers have changed from all-out destruction with wiper tools to information and intelligence gathering.</p> <p>"We saw that wiper activity at the beginning of the conflict from February to April, but then that approach dried up and we saw a heavier focus on espionage," Sigler said. "At the beginning there was an approach to take things down, but when you have a long, drawn-out conflict like this, information becomes more and more valuable."</p> <p>Other organizations and vendors have also pointed the finger directly at Russian intelligence and military outfits. During Black Hat USA 2022 last week, Victor Zhora, deputy chairman and chief digital transformation officer of Ukraine's State Service of Special Communications and Information Protection, told reporters the vast majority of cyber attacks against his country were perpetrated by agencies like the GRU. Zhora said that while some cybercriminal groups -- such as the Conti ransomware group, which publicly pledged its support to Russia -- have joined the government's offensive, most appear to be remaining on the sidelines.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Phishing exploiting Amazon Web Services
SOURCE	https://www.techrepublic.com/article/how-phishing-attacks-are-exploiting-amazon-web-services/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Cybercriminals prefer to use legitimate sites and services in their phishing scams, not just to trick unsuspecting victims but to sneak past security scanners that would otherwise block traffic from a suspicious site. In a report released Thursday, email security provider Avanan describes a new phishing campaign that takes advantage of Amazon Web Services.</p> <p>As one of the most popular cloud storage and hosting products, AWS is a tempting target for cybercriminals, especially since it lets anyone create and host webpages. The service allows you to design and host a website using either WordPress or your own custom code. But just as legitimate users can tap into AWS so can malicious attackers.</p> <p>How attackers are using AWS</p> <p>In the scheme analyzed by Avanan, cybercriminals have been building phishing pages on AWS. By sending a link to such a page through a phishing email, the scammers are able to bypass security tools and convince the recipient to share credentials for sensitive accounts.</p> <p>In one example, the attacker uses a phishing page created and hosted through AWS to warn people about an alleged password expiration. Impersonating Microsoft, complete with a Microsoft logo, the phishing email claims that the user's password will expire today and prompts them to click on a button to keep the same password.</p> <p>Clicking on the button takes the user to the phishing page set up with a phony login prompt. The page even includes the domain name for the victim's company and populates most of the fields. The user is asked only to enter their password, which is then harvested by the people behind the attack.</p> <p>Why this phishing attack works</p> <p>This type of scam often succeeds because the attacker knows how to thwart the usual security defenses. Traditional email security tools use static Allow and Block lists to determine if the content is legitimate by analyzing the linked website. As a prominent website and service, Amazon Web Services will always be on the Allow list, letting the phishing email reach the user's inbox.</p>

	Avanan said it notified AWS of its findings and will provide further updates with any additional details.
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HEADLINE	08/18 Google Play malware over 2M downloads
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/google-play-malware-if-youve-downloaded-these-malicious-apps-delete-them-immediately/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Over two million Android users have downloaded a series of malicious apps that bypassed security protections to get into the Google Play app store, researchers have warned.</p> <p>After installation, the apps use sneaky techniques to hide themselves from the user to avoid being removed, while serving up malicious ads that can link directly to malware.</p> <p>A total of 35 "clearly malicious" apps in the Google Play store have been discovered and detailed by cybersecurity researchers at Bitdefender, many of which duped victims into downloading them.</p> <p>If users have downloaded any of the apps, it's recommended they find and delete them immediately.</p> <p>A Bitdefender spokesperson told ZDNET that the company has contacted Google about the malicious apps in the Play Store. ZDNET has contacted Google, but is yet to receive a response at the time of publication.</p> <p>It's common for malware-laden apps to look clean enough to bypass app store protections, because they only connect to the servers where they receive the malicious download after they have been installed on the user's device.</p> <p>According to Bitdefender, many of the apps are still available to download at the time of writing.</p> <p>One of the apps discovered by researchers is called GPS Location Maps, and it's been downloaded by over 100,000 users. According to researchers, after being downloaded the app changes its label from 'GPS Location Maps' to 'Settings' to make it difficult to find and remove, while it serves pop-up ads linking to malicious websites.</p> <p>This, and many of the other dangerous apps identified by Bitdefender, also gain permission to display over the top of other apps in attempts to force the user to click through. Some of the apps also simulate user clicks to click through to adverts, helping them create illicit profits from enforced visits.</p> <p>Those behind the GPS Location Maps have put a lot of effort into ensuring the malicious app is difficult to reverse engineer and examine, with the main Java payload hidden inside encrypted files. Even when the files are decrypted, the code remains obfuscated.</p> <p>The malicious app also uses another technique to stay hidden – it doesn't appear in the list of most recently used apps on Android devices.</p> <p>Each one of the malicious apps uses similar behaviours once downloaded, serving up adverts while disguising the icon as something else in order to hide it. Some of the malicious apps which have been downloaded over 100,000 times include apps called Personality Charging Show, Image Warp Camera and Animated Sticker Finder.</p> <p>Each of the malicious apps is listed as the only app published by a single developer, but their email addresses and websites are all very similar, leading Bitdefender to believe all of the apps could be the work of a single group or individual. Other apps that have been downloaded more than 100,000 times include Personality Charging Show, Image Warp Camera and Animated Sticker Finder.</p>

	<p>"While official stores are usually very good at weeding malicious or dangerous applications out, some history shows that a small number of bad apps manage to get through and make victims until they get reported. Just because we download an app from the official store doesn't mean it will be safe," said researchers.</p> <p>Users should always be careful about what they download, and be particularly wary of apps by unknown developers which have large numbers of downloads but no reviews.</p> <p>Users should also scrutinize apps that request access to permissions that have nothing to do with the advertised functionality.</p> <p>"Just because an app is downloaded from an official store doesn't mean it's safe," warned researchers.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Spyware hunters expanding their toolset
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/spyware-hunting-tools-mac-pc-black-hat/
GIST	<p>THE SURVEILLANCE-FOR-HIRE INDUSTRY'S powerful mobile spyware tools have gotten increasing attention lately as tech companies and governments grapple with the scale of the threat. But spyware that targets laptops and desktop PCs is extremely common in an array of cyberattacks, from state-backed espionage to financially motivated scams. Due to this growing threat, researchers from the incident response firm Volexity and Louisiana State University presented at the Black Hat security conference in Las Vegas last week new and refined tools that practitioners can use to catch more PC spyware in Windows 10, macOS 12, and Linux computers.</p> <p>Widely used PC spyware—the type that often keylogs targets, tracks the movement of their mouse and clicks, listens in through a computer's microphone, and pulls still photos or video from the camera—can be difficult to detect because attackers intentionally design it to leave a minimal footprint. Rather than installing itself on a target's hard drive like a regular application, the malware (or its most important components) exists and runs only in the target computer's memory or RAM. This means that it doesn't generate certain classic red flags, doesn't show up in regular logs, and gets wiped away when a device is restarted.</p> <p>Enter the field of “memory forensics,” which is geared precisely toward developing techniques to assess what's going on in this liminal space. At Black Hat, the researchers specifically announced new detection algorithms based on their findings for the open source memory forensics framework Volatility.</p> <p>“Memory forensics was very different five or six years ago as far as how it was being used in the field both for incident response and by law enforcement,” Volexity director Andrew Case tells WIRED. (Case is also a lead developer of Volatility.) “It’s gotten to the point where even outside really intense malware investigations, memory forensics is needed. But for evidence or artifacts from a memory sample to be used in court or some type of legal proceeding, we need to know that the tools are working as expected and that the algorithms are validated. This latest stuff for Black Hat is really some hardcore new techniques as part of our effort to build out verified frameworks.”</p> <p>Case emphasizes that expanded spyware detection tools are needed because Volexity and other security firms regularly see real examples of hackers deploying memory-only spyware in their attacks. At the end of July, for example, Microsoft and the security firm RiskIQ published detailed findings and mitigations to counter the Subzero malware from an Austrian commercial spyware company, DSIRF.</p> <p>“Observed victims [targeted with Subzero] to date include law firms, banks, and strategic consultancies in countries such as Austria, the United Kingdom, and Panama,” Microsoft and RiskIQ wrote. Subzero’s main payload, they added, “resides exclusively in memory to evade detection. It contains a variety of capabilities including keylogging, capturing screenshots, exfiltrating files, running a remote shell, and running arbitrary plugins.”</p>

The researchers particularly focused on honing their detections for how the different operating systems talk to “hardware devices” or sensors and components like the keyboard and camera. By monitoring how the different parts of the system run and communicate with each other and looking for new behaviors or connections, memory forensic algorithms can catch and analyze more potentially malicious activity. One potential tell, for example, is to monitor an operating system process that’s always running, say the feature that lets users log in to a system, and to flag it if additional code gets injected into that process after it starts running. If code was introduced later it could be a sign of malicious manipulation.

“If you work in the incident response field, you likely see this malware all the time,” Case said during his Black Hat talk last week. “We see this targeted at our clients on a daily basis. And if you read the reports from other security vendors, it’s pretty much universal that when you have a motivated threat group targeting an organization—whether that’s a research group inside the organization, whether it’s executives, whether it’s down to just an individual person—the malware that gets deployed on those machines are going to leverage access to hardware devices for truly sensitive information.”

To do forensic analysis of what’s happening in a device’s memory at a given time, researchers dump the memory into a sort of snapshot file of everything that was in there at that moment. If your laptop has 16 GB of RAM and the memory is full, you’ll pull out a 16-GB file from it. But to detect attacks in real time, organizations need to set up forensic monitoring on their devices in advance. And not all operating systems make it easy to conduct such monitoring.

Apple, in particular, is known for locking down access to macOS and iOS to minimize system visibility. The company says it takes this approach as a security measure because, in its estimation, users shouldn’t need that level of access to operate within the tightly controlled Apple ecosystem. But the [stance has been controversial](#) for a number of reasons and has [created tension](#) with some security advocates, who say that when exploitable vulnerabilities do inevitably crop up in Apple’s software, particularly iOS, the approach gives the hackers an advantage because defenders have more limited insight and control.

“It can make exploitation harder, and it can make gaining malware persistence on a system harder,” Case says. “But it also makes forensics harder, so the argument goes both ways.”

The team was able to make progress on developing detection tools for all three major desktop operating systems, though. And Case emphasizes that the goal is simply to detect as much spyware as possible wherever it can be done as the malware proliferates more and more.

“We work with a ton of very targeted organizations around the world and in the US, and it’s organizations themselves being targeted. But also, many times, it’s individuals within the organization or within a political movement—these are the people who get targeted with this type of malware,” he says. “So the further we get on this research and the better our forensic tools are, the more we can find this behavior and make it harder for attackers to get into an environment, stay there, and get to data they want.”

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HEADLINE	08/18 Whitworth Univ. ‘final resolution’ in hack
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/education/whitworth-university-cyber-attack/293-ec6e9769-247d-4c56-b705-2382844bd96a
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Whitworth University officials announced they have reached a ‘final resolution’ after a cyber attack that has impacted the university website. Whitworth announced in a statement that it expects to have 95% of the system restored by Wednesday, Aug. 31.</p> <p>The statement says the university has added new layers of system protections to better prevent any future incidents and is asking students, alumni, employees, and donors to be patient as they work toward a resolution.</p>

	<p>Whitworth said it became aware on Friday, July 29, that its information systems had been hacked.</p> <p>Information technology (IT) and Instructional Resources (IR) teams worked alongside cybersecurity experts to stop the incident and restore the systems.</p> <p>As part of the investigation, the IT and IR experts have been working with outside forensic experts to identify if any personal information of students, alumni, employees, or donors was compromised in the data breach.</p> <p>The university says this process will take time and officials will contact those whose information was affected and provide them with the necessary resources to protect it.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Auburn police warn of skimming devices
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/auburn-police-warn-skimming-devices-placed-atms-point-of-sale-terminals/INGVZKKDQNETZCDEE2RX72BDC4/
GIST	<p>AUBURN, Wash. — Police are warning the public to be aware of skimming devices illegally installed on ATMs, point-of-sale terminals and gas pumps.</p> <p>Auburn police tweeted a video showing a skimming device being installed at an Auburn store to show how easily one can be installed.</p> <p>The devices are used to capture data or record cardholders' PINs. The data is then used to create fraudulent debit or credit cards.</p> <p>Police said skimming devices look nearly identical to the authentic devices they are installed on.</p> <p>Authorities warn people to shake and pull the card reader before using their cards. If something seems suspicious, pay with cash.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 New tool: heat, flood, fire risks by location
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/tool-heat-flood-fire-risks-location/281-14b5e39e-abf4-4ef5-9724-169facae93d2
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — An online tool by the nonprofit First Street Foundation aims to identify areas where there is a high risk of extreme heat, flooding or wildfires based on current climate modeling. The tool allows users to enter an address, zip code, county or city and see the expected climate impact.</p> <p>Methodology for the Extreme Heat Model is based on information on local tree canopy and land cover and datasets from the US Geological Service and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Association.</p> <p>The First Street Foundation Wildfire Model uses data from the United States Forest Service to identify vegetation that could be considered fuel, incorporates homes as potential fuel, and considers past weather patterns and environmental changes.</p> <p>The First Street Foundation Flood Model shows any U.S. location's risk of flooding from rain, rivers, tides and storm surge. It provides Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood zone information for properties, as well as analyses of neighborhoods, zip codes, cities, counties and states.</p> <p>There are now a variety of tools people can use to gain insight into risks in their neighborhoods. KING 5 Meteorologist Rich Marriott said over the years, modeling tools have gotten more specific, including the data on the predicted impacts of climate change.</p>

	<p>"Twenty years ago, thirty years ago, our climate models were really rough," Marriott said. "Now we can take what used to be broad, global models and we can run them down smaller and smaller so you can, in the state of Washington, see a difference between, say, Whidbey Island or Spanaway."</p> <p>Marriott says a place's location in relation to Puget Sound plays a significant role in heat levels and future changes will be variations on a theme.</p> <p>"It's going to be warmer everywhere but some places are going to be warmer than other places, just like they are now," Marriott said. "If you have someplace like Whidbey Island is a good example, temperatures in places there could be 20 degrees cooler than Seattle."</p>
Return to Top	<i>You can access the tool here.</i>

HEADLINE	08/19 Anti-vax group in Europe thrives online
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/covid-technology-health-public-italy-454b1b6173ba2d29ce2f7aed5d1b6f8d
GIST	<p>Troubled by the number of unvaccinated COVID-19 patients showing up at his hospital, the French doctor logged on to Facebook and uploaded a video urging people to get vaccinated.</p> <p>He was soon swarmed by dozens, then hundreds, then more than 1,000 hateful messages from an anti-vaccine extremist group known as V_V. The group, active in France and Italy, has harassed doctors and public health officials, vandalized government offices and tried to disrupt vaccine clinics.</p> <p>Alarmed by the abuse of its platform, Facebook kicked off several accounts tied to the group last December. But it didn't stop V_V, which continues to use Facebook and other platforms and, like many anti-vaccine groups around the world, has expanded its portfolio to include climate change denialism and anti-democratic messaging.</p> <p>"Let's go and get them at home, they don't have to sleep anymore," reads one post from the group. "Fight with us!" reads another.</p> <p>The largely unchecked nature of the attacks on the indisputable health benefits of the vaccine highlight the clear limits of a social media company to thwart even the most destructive kind of disinformation, particularly without a sustained aggressive effort.</p> <p>Researchers at Reset, a U.K.-based nonprofit, identified more than 15,000 abusive or misinformation-laden Facebook posts from V_V — activity that peaked in spring 2022, months after the platform announced its actions against the organization. In a report on V_V's activities, Reset's researchers concluded that its continued presence on Facebook raises "questions about the effectiveness and consistency of Meta's self-reported intervention."</p> <p>Meta, Facebook's parent company, noted in response that its 2021 actions were never meant to eliminate all V_V content, but to take down accounts found to be participating in coordinated harassment. After The Associated Press notified Facebook of the group's continued activities on its platform, it said it removed an additional 100 accounts this week.</p> <p>Meta said it's trying to strike a balance between removing content from groups like V_V that clearly violate rules against harassment or dangerous misinformation, while not silencing innocent users. That can be particularly difficult when it comes to the contentious issue of vaccines.</p> <p>"This is a highly adversarial space and our efforts are ongoing: since our initial takedown, we've taken numerous actions against this network's attempts to come back," a Meta spokesman told the AP.</p> <p>V_V is also active on Twitter, where Reset researchers found hundreds of accounts and thousands of posts from the group. Many of the accounts were created shortly after Facebook took action on the program last winter, Reset found.</p>

In response to Reset's report, Twitter said it took enforcement actions against several accounts linked to V_V but did not detail those actions.

V_V has proved especially resilient to efforts to stop it. Named for the movie "V for Vendetta," in which a lone, masked man seeks revenge on an authoritarian government, the group uses fake accounts to evade detection, and often coordinates its messaging and activities on platforms such as Telegram that lack Facebook's more aggressive moderation policies.

That adaptability is one reason why it's been hard to stop the group, according to Jack Stubbs, a researcher at Graphika, a data analysis firm that has tracked V_V's activities.

"They understand how the internet works," Stubbs said.

Graphika estimated the group's membership to be 20,000 in late 2021, with a smaller core of members involved in its online harassment efforts. In addition to Italy and France, Graphika's team found evidence that V_V is trying to create chapters in Spain, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Brazil and Germany, where a similar anti-government movement known as Querdenken is active.

Groups and movements such as V_V and Querdenken have increasingly alarmed law enforcement and extremism researchers who say there's evidence that far-right groups are using skepticism about COVID-19 and vaccines to expand their reach.

Increasingly, such groups are moving from online harassment to real world action.

For instance, in April, V_V used Telegram to announce plans to pay a 10,000 Euro bounty to vandals who spray painted the group's symbol (two red Vs in a circle) on public buildings or vaccine clinics. The group then used Telegram to disseminate photos of the vandalism.

A month before Facebook took action on V_V, Italian police raided the homes of 17 anti-vaccine activists who had used Telegram to make threats against government, medical and media figures for their perceived support of COVID-19 restrictions.

Social media companies have struggled with responding to a wave of misinformation about vaccines since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier this week, Facebook and Instagram suspended Children's Health Defense, an influential anti-vaccine organization led by Robert Kennedy Jr.

One reason is the tricky balancing act between moderating harmful content and protecting free expression, according to Joshua Tucker of New York University, who co-directs NYU's Center for Social Media and Politics and is a senior advisor at Kroll, a tech, government and economic consulting firm.

Striking the right balance is especially important because social media has emerged as a key source of news and information around the world. Leave up too much bad content and users may be misinformed. Take down too much and users will begin to distrust the platform.

"It is dangerous for society for us to be moving in a direction in which nobody feels they can trust information," Tucker said.

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HEADLINE	08/18 Apple warns of serious security flaws
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/apple-warns-of-security-flaw-for-iphones-ipads-and-macs/
GIST	<p>SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Apple disclosed serious security vulnerabilities for iPhones, iPads and Macs that could potentially allow attackers to take complete control of these devices.</p> <p>Apple released two securityreports about the issue on Wednesday, although they didn't receive wide attention outside of tech publications.</p>

Apple's explanation of the vulnerability means a hacker could get "full admin access" to the device. That would allow intruders to impersonate the device's owner and subsequently run any software in their name, said Rachel Tobac, CEO of SocialProof Security.

Security experts have advised users to update affected devices — the iPhone6S and later models; several models of the iPad, including the 5th generation and later, all iPad Pro models and the iPad Air 2; and Mac computers running MacOS Monterey. The flaw also affects some iPod models.

Apple did not say in the reports how, where or by whom the vulnerabilities were discovered. In all cases, it cited an anonymous researcher.

Commercial spyware companies such as Israel's NSO Group are known for identifying and taking advantage of such flaws, exploiting them in malware that surreptitiously infects targets' smartphones, siphons their contents and surveils the targets in real time.

NSO Group has been blacklisted by the U.S. Commerce Department. Its spyware is known to have been used in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America against journalists, dissidents and human rights activists.

Security researcher Will Strafach said he had seen no technical analysis of the vulnerabilities that Apple has just patched. The company has previously acknowledged similarly serious flaws and, in what Strafach estimated to be perhaps a dozen occasions, has noted that it was aware of reports that such security holes had being exploited.

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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	08/19 Taliban: foreign engagement by sharia law
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taliban-leader-says-foreign-engagement-will-be-line-with-sharia-2022-08-19/
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR/KABUL, Aug 19 (Reuters) - The Taliban will deal with the international community in line with sharia law, the supreme leader of the hardline Islamist group said, according to a copy of his speech shared by the information ministry on Friday.</p> <p>Yet to be formally recognised as a government by any foreign capital, the group is struggling with a severe economic crisis due to strict enforcement of international sanctions and the cutting off of development aid.</p> <p>Many governments, including Washington, have put pressure on the Taliban to ease its restrictions on women and to open schools for high-school aged girls.</p> <p>Around 3,000 tribal leaders, officials and religious scholars had gathered in the southern city of Kandahar, where the group's supreme spiritual leader Haibatullah Akhundzada is based, on Thursday, according to state-run news agency Bakhtar. It was the second such gathering since the group took power around a year ago.</p> <p>"This meeting is called to think about the freedom we received by the blessing of Allah, which we achieved from the blood of our mujahideen (fighters)," he said in the speech.</p> <p>"We will deal with the international community as per Islamic Sharia ...if Sharia doesn't allow it, we will not deal with any other country," Akhundzada said.</p> <p>Talks with U.S. diplomats have continued, in particular over how to revive the country's stalled banking sector and the possible release of frozen central bank assets held overseas. But officials have cautioned that many hurdles remain to any progress.</p>

	<p>In an escalation of tensions, the United States last month carried out a drone strike in central Kabul to kill al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and accused the Taliban of violating an agreement between them by sheltering Zawahiri.</p> <p>Thursday's gathering issued several resolutions, according to Bakhtar news agency, including one condemning the drone strike and another saying any neighbouring country that allowed the use of its airspace for the strike was complicit.</p> <p>The United States usually needs to receive permission from neighbouring nations to access landlocked Afghanistan via air.</p> <p>Officials have not disclosed the drone's travel path. Pakistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan, has said its airspace was not used for the attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 ISIS strong in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/18/faq-islamic-state-khorasan-afghanistan-taliban/
GIST	<p>A bomb blast that killed at least 21 worshipers, including an influential cleric, and injured more than 30 others in Afghanistan's capital during evening prayers on Wednesday evening, according to Taliban officials and residents, has renewed focus on the threat to the Taliban posed by Afghanistan's Islamic State affiliate.</p> <p>Residents of the Khair Khana area of Kabul told The Washington Post that the prayer leader who was killed, Amir Mohammad Kabuli, was an outspoken preacher unaffiliated with any one faction. No group has claimed responsibility for Wednesday's blast, but it came a week after the Islamic State-Khorasan (ISIS-K), a rival of the Taliban, claimed responsibility for a bombing that killed Rahimullah Haqqani, a prominent Taliban-linked cleric.</p> <p>It's the latest in a string of attacks, many of which have been attributed to ISIS-K, since the Taliban swept to national power in Afghanistan a year ago.</p> <p>Here's what to know about the Islamic State's presence in Afghanistan.</p> <p>What is ISIS-K?</p> <p>The Islamic State is most associated with Iraq and Syria, where the brutal extremist group held huge swaths of territory under its self-declared "caliphate" at the group's peak in late 2014.</p> <p>Known for its transnational recruitment and appetite for violence, ISIS saw its power decline sharply after a U.S.-coalition drove it from the last of its territory in 2019. But the militant organization and offshoots continue to stage attacks and fuel violence and instability in the Middle East, South Asia and Africa.</p> <p>ISIS-K began operating in Afghanistan in 2015. It was started by Pakistani national Hafiz Saeed Khan, who had pledged allegiance to then-Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in 2014. Originally consisting mostly of Pakistani militants and based largely in the eastern Afghan province of Nangahar, it drew some recruits from the Taliban and other extremist groups.</p> <p>The Islamic State follows a version of Salafism, an ultraconservative movement in Sunni Islam. In Afghanistan, the Hazaras, a Shiite minority group, have been frequent targets of ISIS-K attacks. So have Sufis, who practice a form of Islamic mysticism or asceticism. Kabuli, the cleric killed in Wednesday's bombing, was reportedly a Sufi leader.</p> <p>ISIS-K is led by Sanaullah Ghafari, also known as Shahab al-Muhajir, who is reported to be in eastern Afghanistan, according to the United Nations. Its attacks declined after U.S.-led counterterrorism operations in the group's stronghold in eastern Afghanistan between 2018 and 2020. Still, ISIS-K continued to launch attacks on civilian targets such as schools and weddings.</p>

An Islamic State-claimed attack on Kabul's international airport during the U.S. withdrawal last year killed 13 U.S. troops and an estimated 170 Afghans.

What is the group's relationship to the Taliban?

In a word: combative.

The Taliban has a history of close ties with al-Qaeda, a rival to the Islamic State. Though Taliban leaders pledged in a 2020 agreement with the United States to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a haven for terrorist groups, the [killing of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) in a U.S. drone strike in Kabul last month [seemed to indicate ongoing ties](#) between the groups.

In contrast, the Taliban has clashed with ISIS-K virtually since the Islamic State offshoot first cropped up in Afghanistan. The Taliban mostly [adheres to the Deobandi movement](#) within the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam, which contributes to religious and political differences between the groups.

Before the Taliban takeover, the United Nations [estimated that ISIS-K had some 1,500 to 2,200 fighters](#) in Konar and Nangahar provinces, along with smaller cells in other parts of the country. Islamic State leaders, who think the Taliban is not sufficiently extreme, denounced its victory last year.

How has Taliban rule affected ISIS-K?

In the months after the Taliban seized national control, ISIS-K expanded its reach to nearly all of Afghanistan's provinces, the [U.N. mission in Afghanistan said in November](#). It also stepped up the tempo of its attacks, carrying out suicide bombings, ambushes and assassinations. The group has claimed 224 attacks in Afghanistan since August 2021, 30 of which were considered significant, according to SITE Intelligence Group, a nonprofit that monitors extremist groups. Most targeted Taliban gatherings.

Late last year, the core Islamic State group gave \$500,000 in new funding to ISIS-K, according to the U.N. monitoring team. A Taliban intelligence official [acknowledged in the fall](#) that his group's fight to overthrow the U.S.-backed Afghan government allowed many Islamic State prisoners to escape.

ISIS-K attacks declined over the winter — maybe because of winter weather, the United Nations said, or perhaps as a result of a Taliban counterterrorism campaign, [aided by Pakistani intelligence](#).

The Taliban's approach to counterinsurgency has been brutal: In the fall, local commanders in Jalalabad killed accused Islamic State collaborators and hung their bodies at busy intersections, [The Post reported](#). Hundreds of suspected ISIS-K members disappeared or turned up dead.

Security has improved for most Afghans since the Taliban took power — but recent violence shows the Islamic State remains active. ISIS-K launched a [fresh series of attacks](#) in the spring, also claiming to have fired rockets into neighboring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The violence could “produce some cracks in the armor” of the Taliban government, said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia program at the Wilson Center.

“ISIS-K's strategy is twofold: Target Taliban forces directly to undermine their hold on power, and target civilians to weaken Taliban legitimacy by shattering their core narrative that their takeover restored peace and stability,” he said in an email.

The indiscriminate smaller attacks in urban areas, in lieu of more sophisticated operations, could indicate that ISIS-K is short on “skilled terrorists,” said Antonio Giustozzi, a security expert at King's College London.

“This strategic shift toward mass-casualty attacks and anti-Taliban media campaigns comes far more from a place of fear than confidence,” Rita Katz, SITE Intelligence Group's director, wrote in an email.

Experts and intelligence officials warned last summer that a Taliban victory over the U.S.-backed Afghan government could drive Islamist militants from around the world to Afghanistan. ISIS-K rolled out a multilingual media operation over the past year to attract recruits, according to Katz. For the most part, though, Taliban rule hasn't led yet to the boom in ISIS recruitment that some analysts predicted.

While the [dire economic crisis](#) in Afghanistan over the past year has created fertile ground for radicalization, experts said, Islamic State leaders can be strict about vetting their fighters' ideological commitments.

Some lower-level Taliban commanders, mainly from Tajik and Uzbek communities in the north, have reportedly defected to ISIS-K, according to the United Nations. But the Taliban's [hard-line approach](#) to governance hasn't incentivized its ultraconservative leaders to jump ship, Kugelman said.

The Taliban last month [declared](#) ISIS-K a corrupt "sect" and banned Afghans from having contact with the group. Taliban forces have [garnered praise](#) from some Kabul residents for battling ISIS-K fighters who attacked predominantly Shiite neighborhoods.

In Salafi strongholds, though, the Taliban's heavy-handed counterterrorism strategy could backfire, experts warned.

"They don't have much capacity to use air power, the main tactic to target ISIS-K before the Taliban took over," Kugelman said. "The Taliban have used ground offensives instead, but in so doing they've used scorched-earth tactics that have alienated local communities more than degraded the ISIS-K threat."

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HEADLINE	08/18 Anti-govt. threats up but tough to assess
SOURCE	https://www.opb.org/article/2022/08/18/anti-government-threats-domestic-extremism-national-security/
GIST	<p>Shortly after news broke that federal agents had executed a court-authorized search for documents at former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate, Rita Katz said she and her team jumped online.</p> <p>Katz, the founder and executive director of the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors extremist communities online, said they were primarily interested in what discussions looked like in spaces frequented by the far right, such as Telegram, Gab and Truth Social.</p> <p>"What we saw were calls for civil war," said Katz. "Calls such as, 'This is what the Second Amendment stands for,' and asking then, 'When does the shooting start?'"</p> <p>In the days after, a man was killed in a standoff with the FBI after he attempted to attack the agency's field office in Cincinnati. The U.S. Department of Justice has also charged a man in Pennsylvania with threatening federal law enforcement officers after he allegedly posted violent statements online.</p> <p>The FBI and the Department of Homeland Security issued a joint intelligence bulletin highlighting the escalation in violent rhetoric against their agencies and employees.</p> <p>But even as law enforcement may be monitoring or alerted to threats made in these spaces, experts say that responding to them will be challenging.</p> <p>The shift from foreign to domestic extremism</p> <p>Two decades after the attacks of 9/11, the country has fashioned infrastructure to counter violent extremism coming from foreign terrorist organizations, or those influenced by them. Today, with the DHS shift in focus toward violent domestic extremists, that infrastructure is showing its limits.</p> <p>"There's certainly a more permissive environment for law enforcement to investigate threatening individuals when the threat looked like it was coming from overseas," said Mitch Silber, executive director for the Community Security Initiative, a program created to protect the Jewish communities of greater New York.</p>

"When you're dealing with American citizens who can't be connected to a foreign terrorist organization, that already limits the reach and the ability for law enforcement to go deeper on those individuals because they're protected by the Constitution," he said.

Silber, who once headed intelligence analysis at the New York Police Department, said law enforcement needs to have relatively detailed information about a plot to obtain the required authorization to open an investigation. And though individuals post quite openly about their violent ideations in public online spaces, it often doesn't meet the necessary threshold. For those who recall the last time far right echo chambers churned with this level of anger, this is concerning.

"Before January 6, we had no credible, no specific threat. We just had a ton of non-credible, non-specific threats," said Donell Harvin, a senior policy researcher at the RAND Corporation and the former chief of homeland security and intelligence for the government of the District of Columbia. "It was like this kind of mush they just couldn't do anything with."

Beyond the legal constraints, Harvin said that the nature of the threat has also changed in ways that make effective interdiction of violence more difficult.

First, the uptake of violent, anti-government views has become widespread in the United States, whereas in the past, this sentiment was largely relegated to fringe extremist groups. As a result, the possibility of an attempted attack can come from a much larger and more diffuse pool of radicalized individuals.

Additionally, experts said that law enforcement now has to act almost instantaneously when alerted to a threat.

"There is often a brief period of time between radicalization and mobilization to violence that law enforcement has an opportunity to interdict that individual. And that brief moment is such a small window," said Harvin. "We've seen where people go from radicalization to mobilization of violence very, very quickly."

The legal and practical constraints behind identifying and stopping domestic terrorist attacks have many in the counter-extremism space looking to actors other than law enforcement.

Katz, who has monitored terrorist threats since before 9/11, said she would like to see more focus on the technology companies that facilitate alt-social media platforms where the most violent rhetoric is commonplace. Specifically, she said companies that provide hosting, website security and domain registration should be pressured into dropping clients whose services incite violence.

"Otherwise, it's just going to continue to grow," she said.

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HEADLINE	08/18 Bali bomb maker faces early prison release
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/18/bali-bomb-maker-umar-patek-could-be-released-from-prison-in-indonesia
GIST	<p>Umar Patek, the bomb maker who helped assemble the devices used in the 2002 bombing in Bali, could walk free early from prison this year.</p> <p>The Indonesian ministry of law and human rights regional office in East Java has proposed the early release after the ex-member of Jemaah Islamiyah, an Indonesian terror group linked to al-Qaida, completed two-thirds of his sentence, plus remissions.</p>

Patek gained the remissions as he declared his obedience to Indonesia. “He has made a full pledge to the Republic of Indonesia,” said Zaeroji, the head of the ministry of law and human rights regional office in East Java.

A ministry spokesperson confirmed the proposal was in process.

Patek, whose real name is Hisyam bin Ali Zein, was accused of his role in assembling the bomb that ripped through the Sari Club and Paddy’s Pub in Kuta, killing 202 people. The court in Jakarta sentenced him to 20 years in prison. He was spared the death sentence after collaborating with the police and apologising to the victims’ families.

He was also sentenced for his involvement in attacks on Jakarta churches on Christmas Eve 2000, in which 19 people were killed.

The US offered a \$1m reward for information leading to Patek’s arrest. He was hiding in Abbottabad, the city in Pakistan where the al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden was killed, when he was caught by Pakistani authorities in 2011.

In recent years he has become an icon of the Indonesian government’s achievements in deradicalising terrorist prisoners.

The Bali bombings were Indonesia’s deadliest terror strike. On Saturday 12 October 2002, a suicide bomber blew himself up inside a nightclub packed with tourists on Kuta beach, killing many people instantly and forcing others to flee outside. Another suicide bomber detonated a huge bomb in a car parked on the street in front of two clubs.

Patek admitted he helped make the bombs, but said he did not know how they would be used. Prosecutors argued that he helped to assemble the suicide vests, as well as the detonating cords and boosters connected to the explosives.

Patek left Bali just before the attacks and spent nine years running from the law, travelling in the Philippines and Pakistan. He was considered one of Asia’s most-wanted terror suspects.

Australia’s prime minister, Anthony Albanese, said the decision would “cause further distress” to families of those caught in the bombings, which killed 88 Australians.

“I feel a great deal of common distress, along with all Australians, at this time,” he said on Friday. “He was responsible for death and destruction on a major scale. And this decision by the Indonesian government will add to the trauma that families are feeling at this time.”

Albanese said Australian officials had been told about the sentence reduction overnight, and that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was making diplomatic representations around the case.

“His actions were the actions of a terrorist. They did have such dreadful results for Australian families that are ongoing, the trauma which is there,” he said.

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HEADLINE	08/18 Bloody uprising against Taliban from within
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/18/world/asia/afghanistan-uprising-taliban-mahdi.html
GIST	<p>BALKH AAB, Afghanistan — The rumbling of engines echoed across the valley at dusk, as scores of men with mismatched camouflage and mud-caked Kalashnikovs descended into the town in northern Afghanistan.</p> <p>Many had driven hours down the snow-capped mountains to reach the town and join forces with Mawlawi Mahdi Mujahid, a former Shiite commander within the mostly Sunni Taliban who had recently renounced the new Taliban government and seized control of this district.</p>

For months, the Taliban had tried to bring him back into their fold, wary of his growing clout among some Afghan Shiites eager to rebel against a movement that persecuted them for decades. Now, Taliban forces were massing around the district he controlled — and Mahdi and his men were readying to fight.

“If the Taliban do not want an inclusive government, if they do not give rights to Shiites and to women, then we will never be able to have peace in Afghanistan,” said one fighter, Sayed Qasim, 70. “As long as we have blood in our body we will fight.”

The clashes in Sar-i-Pul Province in June were the latest in a conflict brewing across northern Afghanistan in which a smattering of armed factions have been challenging the heavy hand of the Taliban government — a harsh reminder that Afghanistan has not yet escaped the cycles of violence and bloodshed that defined the country for the past 40 years.

We visited the rebels in Sar-i-Pul in June, getting a rare glimpse into one of these armed groups that, though limited and relatively small, has defied Taliban rule. Interviews with Mahdi, his fighters and villagers paint a portrait of a resistance driven by the grievances of minorities living under an authoritarian government, and by the tortured mind-set of Afghan men who have known only war and are determined to fight.

Taliban officials have sought to play down any uprising in order to maintain an image of popular support and of providing peace and security to the country. And it is unlikely that any of the eight or so resistance groups that have emerged so far can pose a legitimate threat to the Taliban’s control of the country. The ragtag militias are ill-equipped and underfunded and [have been unable to attract](#) backing from any major foreign power.

Still, the Taliban, intent on stamping out any vestige of dissent, have been consistently brutal. The new government has flooded resistance strongholds with thousands of soldiers who have committed summary executions of captured fighters and tortured residents they believe support the armed opposition, according to [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#).

The crackdown is the latest sign that much like their first regime, the new government relies on force and intimidation to crush any form of dissent. But the brutal tactics risk alienating Afghans already on edge because of the country’s collapsed economy and a return to the Taliban’s hard-line Islamist rule.

The Embers of an Uprising

Early one morning in June, Mahdi gathered a handful of advisers in his home in the center of Balkh Aab and peered out the dirtied window. Outside, the town seemed to buzz with nervous anticipation. Dozens of armed men milled along the muddied main drag, drinking tea and smoking cigarettes as they waited on their marching orders.

Two weeks earlier, Mahdi had seized control of this untamed slice of northern Afghanistan — prompting Taliban forces to mass along its borders. Now a Taliban offensive seemed imminent and the brisk mountain air carried a palpable sense of unease. Most of the district’s 40,000 residents were Hazaras, an ethnic minority of predominantly Shiite Muslims whom the Taliban consider heretics and [massacred by the thousands](#) during their first rule.

The 33-year-old rebel leader had grown up in a village not far from here and joined the Taliban after a stint in prison where he found brotherhood among the Talib prisoners who railed against the corruption of the former government. A rare Hazara member of the southern Pashtun movement, the Taliban showcased Mahdi in propaganda videos as proof of the movement’s inclusivity — a move most saw as little more than a publicity stunt.

But after the Taliban seized power, Mahdi fell out with the new rulers. Most locals say he defected because of a dispute with the Taliban over revenue from Balkh Aab’s lucrative coal mines. By his own

telling, Mahdi left the movement in protest, disillusioned with how the insurgents-turned-rulers treated Hazaras.

“After the Islamic Emirate came to power, the Hazaras have suffered the most,” he said in an interview in Balkh Aab. Hazaras “cannot spend their entire lives like this, whether or not they want to now, one day the people will stand against the Islamic Emirate,” he added.

For many residents, Mahdi’s motives didn’t seem to matter. Hundreds of Shiite men eager to take up arms against the Taliban flocked to his new resistance militia in the spring. They were a mix of former policemen, soldiers and veterans of the [Fatemiyoun forces](#), an Iranian-backed militia that fought in Iraq and Syria. To them, his defection offered a rallying cry — proof that no Hazara, even one who had fought on the Taliban’s behalf, would ever be accepted in a country under their control.

“The Taliban must recognize Shiite and Hazara, and participate in the system,” said Mohammad Jawid, 27, who joined Mahdi’s militia this spring. “Otherwise we are here and we will fight for our rights.”

Mr. Jawid huddled among dozens of Mahdi’s men in a small concrete building perched on the edge of the Qom Kotal mountain at the district’s northern flank. The men had slept in shallow caves desperate for any protection from the bitter cold winds and wet pounding of snow.

Inside the building, dozens of men sat on the floor, their weapons sat stacked in the corner and the smell of smoke from a bonfire outside filled the room. Many of the rebels were in their 60s and 70s, with deep creases etched into their brows and ammo belts wrapped around their waist. They had spent their lives fighting first the Soviets and then the Taliban, watching as men like Mahdi switched from enemy to ally, then enemy and ally yet again.

“Do we have rights? Are we not Afghan? For how long can we live like this?” one man shouted from the doorway, as if to rally the cold, shivering militants. “If the fight starts in Balkh Aab, then there will be a fight in Afghanistan!”

Later that night along the district’s southern border, some of Mahdi’s advisers gathered at a rebel safe house on the shores of one of the district’s many rivers. One of the advisers, who, fearing retribution, preferred to go by his surname, Rezayee, arrived on a motorcycle and changed out of his military fatigues into the traditional Afghan salwar kameez.

Sitting on a floor cushion, he smiled and asked us: “So, do you have any advice on how to start a war?”

The Battle for Balkh Aab

For all of his impassioned talk of Shiite rights and an enduring stronghold of resistance, Mahdi’s opponent was a weathered insurgent group that would soon apply the full brunt of their decades fighting a global superpower on Mahdi’s ragtag team of men — with gruesome results.

The Taliban launched their offensive in late June, sending thousands of troops through the knee-high snow and jagged peaks to Mahdi’s stronghold on the Qom Kotal mountain. As they opened fire on their positions across the escarpment, helicopters repurposed from the Western-backed government and packed with armed Taliban soldiers orbited overhead. Their tan and green camouflage cut across the pale gray sky as the bone-rattling sound of their rotor blades mixed with the crescendo of automatic fire.

The high-pitched shrieks and heavy thuds of rockets echoed across the mountain and into the valleys below throughout the night, striking terror into the nearby villages. Thousands of residents — once more trapped in a conflict they wanted no part in — loaded the few loaves of bread, water and blankets they had onto the backs of donkeys and began the hourslong walk to safety into nearby mountains, where they listened to the depressingly familiar soundtrack of war.

“The people were hungry and thirsty and the children were crying — we did not know what would happen,” said Reza, 27, a resident who fled.

Despite being outgunned and outmanned, the rebels thought their knowledge of their district's terrain would give them the upper hand. The area is a labyrinth of mountains and canyons that rise out of the earth as if to swallow any invading force. Entering the district center requires navigating a maze of roads often made impassable by boulders, flash floods and snowstorms that pound the mountains with ice year-round.

But the Taliban found two residents to help them navigate the little-known footpaths into the center of the district, outflanking Mahdi's forces as he concentrated his ragtag group of fighters at Qom Kotal, according to rebel fighters, residents and a Taliban official.

As dawn broke the following morning, Mahdi's men found the farms and riverbeds surrounding the district center crawling with Taliban soldiers. They opened fire on the unsuspecting rebels who had destroyed the main roads into the town days earlier — a futile attempt to keep the Taliban forces at bay.

For two days, the town was engulfed in running gun battles between the Taliban and Mahid's men. Shops that lined its main thoroughfare burned. Mud brick homes and at least one Shiite shrine were transformed into defensive positions. As the fighting raged, the Taliban repaired the destroyed roads and sent a convoy of armored vehicles to hold the territory they seized.

In the twilight hours of the Battle for Balkh Aab, the Taliban turned to one of their tried and true weapons — a suicide bomber — to try to flush the last remaining rebel holdouts from the town. The rebels had taken position in one of the homes along the main drag, its metal gate peppered with pockmarks from the fighting. Shell casings littered the surrounding wheat fields, waiting to be discovered by farmers desperate to return to their harvests.

In a lull between bursts of fire, the suicide bomber approached the rebels on foot. But before he could reach their position, Mahdi's men opened fire and he detonated. The only casualty was the bomber and a donkey who had wandered into the frontline.

Still, the last of Mahdi's men were surrounded by Taliban soldiers. No rebel reinforcements were on the way. Their only options were to surrender, and face what felt like certain death, or retreat. Either way, the uprising was over.

The Aftermath

After the fighting subsided, an eerie quiet fell over the district. Many of the villagers refused to return home from the mountainside, terrified the Taliban would exact revenge on them. The few who did return walked into scenes of carnage.

Dozens of bloodied bodies of Mahdi's fighters and Taliban soldiers lay strewn across gardens, farmland and dirt roads in the district center, according to interviews with nearly a dozen locals and a local Taliban official.

A 65-year-old man had been killed after he went to collect the body of his son, a militant with Mahdi who was fatally wounded in the fighting. Both of their bodies were thrown in an open pit in the district center. Nearby, the blood from the donkey killed by the Taliban suicide bomber splattered the ground.

One resident of Takshar village near the district center barely looked up as he returned home, he said, terrified of making eye contact with the hundreds of Taliban soldiers standing idly on the road. He asked not to be named, out of fear of Taliban retribution.

As he reached his front gate, the man froze: Lying on the ground were the bodies of three of his male relatives who had stayed behind to guard their home against looters, he said. The man grabbed a shovel and dragged their bullet-ridden and bloodied bodies into shallow graves.

On his way back to the mountains, the Takshar resident stumbled upon four more bodies in a nearby alley, he said. Three looked like Mahdi's fighters, but he recognized the fourth as an old homeless man, Noor

	<p>Ahmad, known by the nickname Noorak. He stood there for a moment, torn between the urge to bury them, too, and fear of staying too long around the Taliban.</p> <p>He decided to drag the bodies under the shade of the tree — at least there they would not rot as quickly there, he thought.</p> <p>After the fighting ended, Mahdi and dozens of his men escaped into the mountains, eluding the Taliban's helicopters, Humvees and troops. Twenty-five of his men were killed in the fighting, according to his adviser, Rezayee, while hundreds of others hid their weapons and melted back into their villages.</p> <p>"The war is not over," Rezayee said in a phone interview two weeks after the battle. "We promise that this is not the end."</p> <p>But the fight did not last long.</p> <p>This week, Taliban security forces recognized Mahdi — his face clean shaven in an attempted disguise — trying to flee across the border into Iran, according to Inayatullah Khwarazmi, the spokesman for the Taliban's Ministry of Defense, and one of Mahdi's advisers.</p> <p>The spokesman said the Taliban killed him. The adviser said the remaining rebels were on the run.</p> <p>Mahdi's uprising was over.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 ISIS Beatles: 2011 arrests led to convictions
SOURCE	https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-62581358
GIST	<p>Hostages freed by the Islamic State terror cell, known as The Beatles, gave vital evidence to identify their captors, say police.</p> <p>The hostages told British police the men had boasted of being arrested at a London demonstration years earlier.</p> <p>Officers identified the protest and recovered video of El Shafee Elsheikh and Alexandra Kotey being arrested.</p> <p>Analysis of their phones showed the pair's links to the cell's executioner, Mohammed Emwazi, or "Jihadi John".</p> <p>The details were disclosed by Scotland Yard ahead of Elsheikh's sentencing in the United States on Friday. Elsheikh was convicted in April of lethal hostage-taking and conspiracy to commit murder.</p> <p>Co-defendant Alexandra Kotey pleaded guilty in September 2021 and was jailed for life.</p> <p>'Colossal Investigation'</p> <p>"This was an investigation into some truly horrific crimes," said Commander Richard Smith, head of Counter Terrorism Command.</p> <p>He described it as a "truly colossal investigation", lasting eight years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In November 2012, officers received reports of the kidnappings in northern Syria of British journalist John Cantlie, who is still missing, and American photo journalist James Foley • In 2014 the masked killer known as Jihadi John began a wave of recorded executions that sent shock waves across the globe <p>The group's actions resulted in the deaths of four US hostages - Mr Foley and fellow journalist Steven Sotloff plus aid workers Kayla Mueller and Peter Kassig.</p>

It is also blamed for the deaths of British aid workers David Haines and Alan Henning, and Japanese journalists Haruna Yukawa and Kenji Goto.

"These were some of the most shocking and barbaric acts that we've seen and they were carried out with chilling callousness and brutality," said Cdr Smith.

His officers were part of an international hunt to identify and bring to justice Jihadi John and his associates.

Cdr Smith described how their first breakthrough came from conversations with those hostages released by IS after ransoms were paid.

They disclosed how their masked captors, who were "at great pains to hide their identities", spoke of having been arrested at a demonstration against far-right group, the English Defence League, in 2011.

"Based on that snippet of conversation, our investigation team was able to go back and identify a particular EDL march in London on 11 September 2011," said Cdr Smith.

Police records and video showed Kotey and Elsheikh were part of a group that was arrested after reports of a stabbing at the march, but later released without charge.

"The information was invaluable in helping us zero in on them as being the men the hostages had described to us," said Cdr Smith.

It proved the two men had been associates before they went to Syria in 2012.

Data from their phones, which were seized when they were arrested, also revealed their contacts with Emwazi, who was killed in a drone strike in Syria in 2015.

The police also held on their records vital evidence against Emwazi.

He was questioned about a series of thefts in London in 2012 and his interviews with police were still on tape, Cdr Smith revealed.

Forensic voice analysis of these police interviews showed "a very strong likelihood" the recordings were of the same person as the masked executioner in the IS videos.

A further breakthrough came in an unrelated case when in 2014 Elsheikh's brother, Khalid, was arrested in an Operation Trident investigation into UK gun crime.

Digital interrogation analysis of Khalid's mobile phone revealed messages sent by Elsheikh from Syria on the encrypted Telegram platform.

They included an image of Elsheikh holding a firearm, which was used as evidence against him during his trial.

"These men thought they were beyond the reach of law" but were brought to justice following "a remarkable investigation" and thanks to the "fortitude and courage of the hostages who gave evidence against them," said Cdr Smith.

The pair were arrested and detained by Kurdish militia in Syria in January 2018 and were eventually sent for trial in the United States.

UK ministers had argued their best chance of conviction lay in them being tried in the US.

	<p>In August 2020 the Supreme Court ruled that a stay preventing the Home Office from supplying intelligence against the men must be lifted after the US said it would drop death-penalty charges against them.</p> <p>However, Cdr Smith disclosed that a file had been sent by his officers to the Crown Prosecution Service, after which the UK attorney general authorised 139 charges, including hostage-taking and kidnapping, against Elsheikh and Kotey.</p> <p>Asked why these British men were not tried in the UK, he said: "Our job was to gather the evidence," adding that British detectives had been "delighted to support" the US prosecution.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/17 FBI office attacker viewed as 'odd outsider'
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/soldiers-recall-fbi-cincinnati-office-attacker-as-awkward-but-no-radical-11660738854?st=6wstusxwlkj56q5&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink
GIST	<p>Ricky Shiffer, the military veteran who attacked an FBI office last week before being shot to death by police, was an odd outsider, fellow soldiers recalled, but not one who had shown radical tendencies during his military service.</p> <p>Mr. Shiffer tried to use a nail gun to breach bulletproof glass at a Federal Bureau of Investigation office in Cincinnati before brandishing an AR-15-style rifle and fleeing the scene. He was killed after a shootout and hourslong standoff with law enforcement.</p> <p>Mr. Shiffer served in the U.S. Navy from 1998 to 2003. For years, he was stationed aboard a nuclear submarine, where he was eligible for a top-secret clearance. He served in the Florida National Guard as an infantryman from 2008 to 2011 and deployed for a year to support the war in Iraq.</p> <p>In recent years, Mr. Shiffer became an enthusiastic supporter of former President Donald Trump, according to law-enforcement officials familiar with his social-media accounts. Following the recent FBI search of Mr. Trump's Mar-a-Lago home, Mr. Shiffer, 42 years old, posted violent calls to arms on his Truth Social account, advocating attacking FBI agents. In the wake of his death, his actions and social media posts appeared to be radicalizing others, according to law-enforcement officials.</p> <p>The FBI and Department of Homeland Security warned in a memo to local officials that Mr. Shiffer's attack may be inspiring other extremists, some of whom have praised him online and called for more violence. Investigators who reviewed his social-media footprint said he was ideologically driven, motivated by what they termed "personal, anti-FBI beliefs."</p> <p>Reports of his radicalization were a surprise to two of those who served with Mr. Shiffer in the National Guard, who remembered him as someone who was sometimes unable to adapt to social situations, but who appeared to have moderate political views and didn't seem violent.</p> <p>His former team leader and fellow soldier, Spencer Contat, described Mr. Shiffer as an untalented soldier who was quickly assigned the duties of an ammo bearer because they required little skill. Mr. Contat joined the unit around the same time as Mr. Shiffer and served with him for more than a year, but left before it deployed to Kuwait.</p> <p>"We tried to find something he wouldn't mess up," Mr. Contat said.</p> <p>"He had trouble fitting in," said a former squad mate who considered Mr. Shiffer a friend a decade ago when they served together. He recalled that he and other soldiers worked to teach Mr. Shiffer how he should act in social situations. They deployed together to Kuwait, where they talked and hung out over the course of a yearlong deployment. After the deployment, he said he stayed in touch with Mr. Shiffer for some time, even crashing once on his couch after a long night out.</p>

In the military, Mr. Shiffer frequently misplaced equipment and didn't wear his gear properly, the soldier who served with him said. He wasn't great at his job, but he wanted to please other people by accomplishing tasks assigned to him, the soldier said.

Mr. Shiffer deployed to Kuwait in January 2010, where his unit primarily acted as guards for buses traveling from Iraq or around military camps. He talked about being unfulfilled by the uneventful deployment where they saw no combat, according to the fellow soldier who was deployed with him.

National Guard troops typically drill one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer, apart from deployments. Unlike active duty soldiers, Guard members don't typically live near each other or socialize apart from when they are drilling or on deployment. So those in his unit didn't necessarily spend much time with him outside of those occasions.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	08/18 Need police directing traffic sports games?
SOURCE	https://www.thestranger.com/news/2022/08/18/77966172/we-probably-do-not-need-cops-directing-traffic-at-sports-games
GIST	<p>In order to reduce the strain on Seattle's overworked and understaffed police department, the Seattle City Council wants to use civilian Parking Enforcement Officers rather than sworn officers to direct traffic at large public events.</p> <p>Though Seattle Police Department Interim Chief Adrian Diaz agrees that using cops for that work "makes our officers tired" and "has an impact throughout all our operations," as he mentioned at last week's public safety committee, the cops have been slow to embrace state and local efforts to ease this burden on departments. Their stated reasons for caution, however, don't hold water.</p> <p>Chief Diaz Clashes with the City Council over Traffic Enforcement</p> <p>In the latest attempt to slow-roll this policy, at last week's public safety committee Chief Diaz pushed back on the council's plans, claiming "there are some legal requirements we have to be involved with due to Homeland Security requirements that a certain radius has to be secure."</p> <p>After multiple requests for clarification over the course of a week, the department declined to name the specific "legal requirements" that weighed so heavily on Diaz's mind.</p> <p>Though a few potential obstacles that I'll discuss later do exist, no one at the Department of Homeland Security, the State Legislature, or any of Seattle's stadiums could point me to a law or code that "requires" local law enforcement to serve as traffic cones.</p> <p>DHS "Requires" Cops to Serve as Traffic Cones – or Do They?</p> <p>The DHS publishes two regulations regarding security at large public events. Both reference local law enforcement as one possible way to provide security, but neither explicitly requires venues to choose uniformed cops as their only means of providing security.</p> <p>In accordance with a federal law called the SAFETY Act, large venues typically develop their own safety plans, and then they consult a local program specialist with DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to evaluate and certify the plan.</p> <p>CISA publishes a list of best practices for venues to consider while developing those plans, but none of those suggestions carry the weight of a legal requirement. Instead, the agency categorizes suggested policies as "strongly recommended," "recommended," or "suggested."</p>

Paying a cop to direct traffic counts as a “recommended” best practice, but in its publicly available materials the agency does not offer guidance on the size of that detail. Instead, since each stadium and its surrounding neighborhood present unique security concerns, venues make that call on a case-by-case basis.

Under this process, the venue—not the Department of Homeland Security—sets the number of officers it needs for each event’s safety plan in its contracts with the police department.

The other possible DHS requirement—that isn’t actually a requirement at play here involves a [Security and Resiliency Guide](#) that the DHS Office for Bombing Prevention publishes to help venues prevent terrorist attacks.

That guide recommends that venue security staff establish a security perimeter to keep prohibited items away from the stadium’s gate or other areas where people congregate, which mirrors Diaz’s language about securing a “certain radius” around stadiums. But those same recommendations expressly acknowledge that keeping that perimeter secure doesn’t necessarily need to involve law enforcement officers.

According to the guide, a security perimeter can be “a physical barrier with entry points for access” or a virtual barrier “established by the presence of appropriately trained staff or security professionals.”

So, while having a law enforcement presence onsite to respond to an active shooter or bomb threat seems reasonable, no DHS guidelines require uniformed cops to direct traffic.

A Vague State Law Raises Questions

While DHS “requirements” may not set any clear rules on the number of cops needed to staff large events, a vague state law could still stymie the Council’s plan to take this important but menial task off the plates of highly trained officers.

That [state law](#) makes the act of ignoring an instruction from a “traffic or police officer” a misdemeanor crime. However, the law doesn’t expressly limit the authority to give those instructions to someone with a gun and a badge.

Last year, that confusion led State Senator Rebecca Saldaña (D-Seattle) to introduce [Senate Bill 5354](#), which would have cleared up this whole mess by explicitly giving civilian flaggers the authority to direct traffic as part of a safety plan developed by the City of Seattle. Seattle City Councilmember Lisa Herbold testified in support of that bill, saying that it would allow the City to use its policing resources more efficiently.

Beth Knox, president of the Seattle Sports Commission, a group that lobbies on behalf of venue operators such as the Seahawks and the Kraken, also testified in support of the bill. In her view, clarifying the state law would give large venues both “flexibility” and “certainty” in how they craft their safety plans amid local and nationwide police staffing shortages.

That bill died in committee this spring, but that doesn’t necessarily mean the Council’s plan to use civilian Parking Enforcement Officers for this work died along with it.

When the bill was introduced, a City of Seattle lobbyist told Sen. Saldaña that the City’s reading of the ambiguous law didn’t prohibit the use of civilian flaggers to do this work. In fact, before she introduced the bill, the City already planned to move ahead with changes “to make it easier to deploy non-police flaggers.”

While the ambiguity might have given City leaders enough confidence to move forward aggressively on the Council’s plan, they’ll still need to convince the venues that actually develop those safety plans to adopt their reading of the state law at issue. According to Senator Saldaña, those large venue operators want the clarity in state law offered by her bill.

	It's still possible that the Council and other policymakers in City Hall could bring those enormous private corporations around to their way of thinking, but until they do, or until Sen. Saldaña's bill passes, then our overworked police officers will continue to spend their precious overtime hours pointing at cars instead of patrolling the streets or investigating serious crimes.
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HEADLINE	08/18 Europe glacier melt most severe on record
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/08/18/glaciers-alps-europe/
GIST	<p>Pascal Egli has run on trails winding through the Alps for nearly two decades, but until this summer, he had never seen the mountains so bare.</p> <p>Extreme heat waves had transformed the mountain landscape. Routes once considered easy were now dangerous. Snow bridges over crevasses collapsed, making certain areas impassable. Rocks had tumbled unexpectedly from glaciers and bare mountainsides, injuring and even killing some in their path.</p> <p>“By mid-June, it was really, really kind of shocking,” said Egli, who received his Ph.D. in glaciology from the University of Lausanne in Switzerland this summer. “It was getting so hot and things are melting so fast, you couldn’t safely do certain [13,000-foot] peak routes anymore because some crevasse bridges were a bit unsure.”</p> <p>By the end of June, many mountaineers stopped going out on the glaciers — months earlier than normal. While European glaciers have been shrinking for decades, data and field reports show that the melting this summer is the most severe on record. Some glaciers have melted one to two months faster than normal, which researchers say is the latest drastic example of the effect of human-caused climate change.</p> <p>And there’s already been wide impact: Ski resorts across the Alps closed the summer ski season early because of unsafe conditions. In rare occurrences, normal, easier routes were closed on mountains including Mont Blanc and Matterhorn.</p> <p>“I would say it is off the charts compared to anything we’ve ever measured before,” Mylène Jacquemart, a glaciologist at ETH Zurich, said in an email. “We are currently seeing conditions that, even in a pretty bad year, we would only expect at the very end of the season. When we calculate the final mass balance at the end of September, I expect that it will be the worst year on record by a large margin.”</p> <p>Andrea Fischer, a glacier scientist at the Austrian Academy of Science, agreed that this year’s melt season is exceptional.</p> <p>“This melt season does not compare to others, as we have no evidence of such an extreme melt in our records,” which began in 1948. Data shared with Reuters indicated mass loss in the Alps is the highest in at least 60 years.</p> <p>The Alps, as well as other European glaciers, play an important role in the region. Mountain snowpack provides water to major rivers, delivering up to 90% of water to lowland Europe for drinking, irrigation and hydropower. The Alps also attract more than 120 million people, like Egli, for adventure sports and to ski resorts. Declines in these Alpine glaciers can stress the economy, and the loss in snow cover can exacerbate global warming and increase sea level rise.</p> <p>Punishing summer heat waves triggered the melt, but processes that initiated the rapid melt-off began months ago.</p> <p>Winter snowpack was lower than normal — only half the typical amount at the end of the season, Jacquemart said — limiting the growth of the glacier. For instance, Switzerland’s Gries Glacier recorded its lowest snow quantity on record at about 53% below average in April.</p>

At the end of winter and early spring, large plumes of dust from the Sahara coated the snow surface, darkening the glaciers. The darker surface absorbed more sunlight rather than reflecting it into space, helping to warm what little snow had fallen.

Spring was also abnormally warm and dry for much of Western Europe, with little snow falling at high elevations on the glacier.

Then summer heat came in full force early on. Southwest Europe reached its highest average May maximum temperature in 55 years of records. Then Europe experienced its second-warmest June on record.

“The combined heat and lack of precipitation have put the glaciers in a state that is unprecedented,” said Jacquemart, who also works at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research. It’s alarming because there isn’t just one glacier experiencing high melt, but “rather the fact that the situation is so bad everywhere in the European Alps,” she said.

Satellite data showed several glaciers shrinking after a heat wave in mid-June that brought temperatures 18 degrees Fahrenheit higher than average in some regions. After about a week of unusually high temperatures, the Sabbione Glacier, which feeds into a hydropower reservoir, lost about 35% of its snow cover, according to glaciologist Mauri Peltó.

Losing snow cover early in the melt season is problematic because bare glacier ice melts 50% faster than if it were covered with snow. As heat waves continued, melting hastened in July.

“Glacier melt there in July was higher than the ever-recorded maximum for the full season,” Fischer said.

Satellite data shows significant melting of the Rhone Glacier, which feeds into the Rhone River, from June to July. By July 15, the snow line on the glacier was located at 9,700 feet — about 500 feet higher than is typical for that time of year.

Egli remembers running along a snow-covered ridge in the central Switzerland Alps with his dad when he was 12 years old. It was one of his first mountaineering adventures before he competed professionally. At the summit, he could see Zurich in the distance. Snow covered the summit slope facing the city even in the summer.

Two decades later, he visited to find the area was mainly rock and debris, the snow cover gone both on the ridge and the summit face. A glacier leading from the summit was now bare ice because temperatures have become too warm to retain the snowpack. Ice and firn, or dense snow leftover from previous seasons, also disappeared from the ridge.

Mountaineering practices have already changed in the past few decades in response, he said. Some routes are now only safe in April or May — before the trail becomes too dangerous.

Egli said he began to realize that “some of the glaciers we used to run over, they simply won’t exist anymore.”

Fischer said the shifts coincide with long-term changes in the climate. Since the 1980s, the Alps have experienced an increase in temperature from 0.36 to 0.9 degrees Fahrenheit per decade — significantly affecting snowfall and melt during the spring and summer.

“In the last 2 decades, the lack of summer snow got normal, and the melting season was getting longer and longer,” Fischer said in an email.

According to the Research Center for Alpine Ecosystems, the duration of snow cover near the valley floor of the Northern Alps has been reduced by five weeks since the 1970s. By 2050, snow cover could be reduced by another four to five weeks.

	<p>Additionally, the number of hot days could increase by 15 to 30 days on the valley floor and in the mid-mountains. Today, the areas only experience two to five days of such temperatures.</p> <p>“Northern Europe is a part of the globe which is projected to become warmer yet than the rest of the world,” said W. Tad Pfeffer, a professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder. “The Alps have been hit very hard. Glaciers are shrinking in Alaska but not like the Alps.”</p> <p>In rare cases, the rapid melt can spur exceptional events like the collapse of Marmolada Glacier in Italy’s Dolomites region. During a heat wave in July, a glacier chunk separated from the mountain and triggered an avalanche of ice, rock and debris below, killing 11 hikers.</p> <p>“All glaciers in the Alps are suffering from heat and the melting processes are accelerated. In the Dolomites, the glaciers are generally smaller and thus more sensitive to climate change,” said Mauro Valt, a glaciologist at the Arabba Avalanche Center.</p> <p>Outside of the Alps, other mountainous glaciers have also experienced record melt. Glacier melt in Svalbard, Norway, saw its most melt on record during the first two months of the summer.</p> <p>“We would not be seeing this in the absence of [human] influence on climate,” Pfeffer said. “Things that became kind of once-in-a-lifetime events started to become kind of routine ... We’re seeing the future.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Jordan River Jesus’ baptism site is a trickle
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mideasts-jordan-river-rich-holiness-poor-water-88526412
GIST	<p>ALONG THE JORDAN RIVER -- Kristen Burckhardt felt overwhelmed. She needed time to reflect, to let it sink in that she had just dipped her feet in the water where Jesus is said to have been baptized, in the Jordan River.</p> <p>“It’s very profound,” said the 53-year-old visitor from Indiana. “I have not ever walked where Jesus walked for one thing.”</p> <p>Here, tourists and pilgrims, many driven by faith, come to follow in Christ’s footsteps, to touch the river’s water, to connect to biblical events.</p> <p>Symbolically and spiritually, the river is of mighty significance to many. Physically, the Lower Jordan River of today is a lot more meager than mighty.</p> <p>By the time it reaches the baptismal site, its dwindling water looks sluggish, a dull brownish green shade.</p> <p>Its decline is intertwined with the decades-old Arab-Israeli conflict and rivalry over precious water in a valley where so much is contested.</p> <p>A stretch of the river, for instance, was a hostile frontier between once-warring Israel and Jordan. The waterway also separates Jordan to the east from the Israeli-occupied West Bank, seized by Israel in a 1967 war and sought by the Palestinians for a state.</p> <p>“It’s a victim of the conflict, definitely. It’s a victim of people, because it’s what we did as people to the river, basically, and now adding to all this it’s a victim of climate change,” said Yana Abu Taleb, the Jordanian director of EcoPeace Middle East, which brings together Jordanian, Palestinian and Israeli environmentalists and lobbies for regional collaboration on saving the river. “So it’s a victim in every way.”</p>

EcoPeace has said for years that the Lower Jordan, which runs south from the Sea of Galilee, is threatened by decades of water diversions and by pollution. Only a tiny fraction of its historical water flow now reaches its terminus in the Dead Sea.

Standing at the Jordanian baptismal site Bethany Beyond the Jordan, Burckhardt grappled with many emotions — among them, sadness for the river’s dwindling.

“I am sure God above is also sad.”

The river’s opposing banks are home to rival baptismal sites where rituals of faith unfold, a reflection of the river’s enduring allure.

The river holds further significance as the scene of miracles in the Old Testament.

At the Jordanian baptismal site on a recent day, a woman dipped her feet in the waters and then cupped some with her hands, rubbing it on her face and head. Others crossed themselves or bent to fill bottles.

Rustom Mkhjian, director general of the Baptism Site Commission in Jordan, spoke passionately about the Jordanian site’s claim to authenticity — UNESCO has declared it a World Heritage Site “of immense religious significance to the majority of denominations of Christian faith, who have accepted this site as the location where Jesus” was baptized.

“Every year we celebrate interfaith harmony, and among my happiest days in my life is days when I see Jews, Christians and Muslims visit the site and the three of them cry,” Mkhjian said.

The Jordanian and West Bank sites give visitors access to a narrow stretch of the river, where they face people on the other side. An Israeli flag at the West Bank’s Qasr al-Yahud serves as a reminder that the river is a frontier separating the two worlds.

That site is also billed as the place where Jesus was baptized. Jordan and Israel, which signed a peace treaty in 1994, compete for these people’s tourism dollars.

Several people in flowing white robes waded in from the West Bank. Visitors in another group there stood on the bank or in the water as two men in black poured river water over their heads.

“Oh, Brothers, let’s go down. ... Down in the river to pray,” some sang.

Such serene moments contrast with the hostilities that have played out on the river’s banks.

“Any fresh water left in the river would have in the past been seen as empowering the enemy,” said Gidon Bromberg, EcoPeace Middle East’s group’s Israeli director. “You take everything that you can.”

“Israel, from a historical perspective, has taken about half the water, and Syria and Jordan have taken the other half,” Bromberg said.

Palestinians can no longer access or use water from the Jordan, a 2013 U.N.-German report noted. Syria doesn’t have access either but has built dams in the Yarmouk River sub-basin, which is part of the Jordan River basin, it added.

“The Jordan River in the past, for Palestinians, meant livelihoods and economic stability and growth,” said Nada Majdalani, EcoPeace’s Palestinian director. Now, she added, it has been reduced to an “ambition of statehood and sovereignty over water resources.”

The river's decline, she said, is especially disappointing to elderly Palestinians who remember "how they used to go fishing, how they used to have a dip in the river."

Bromberg said that "from a Jewish tradition, you know, the river and its banks are a place of miracles ... (but) it doesn't reflect a place of miracles in its current depleted state."

In July, Israel approved plans to rehabilitate a stretch of the Lower Jordan, a decision Environmental Protection Minister Tamar Zandberg called "historic."

"For decades it was neglected and most of its waters were taken, and it effectively turned into a sewage canal," Zandberg said in a statement. "In an era of climate crisis and a serious ecological crisis, there is double significance to rehabilitating the River Jordan."

Speaking by phone, Zandberg said the plan focuses on a stretch that runs in Israeli territory and reflects Israel's improved water situation given its desalination program, which has left it much less reliant on water it has been using from the Sea of Galilee.

"It can provide a success story on that segment, and then it will enable more successful partnerships in the future" in the region.

That's something that hasn't always come easily

A regional rehabilitation and development master plan announced in 2015 by EcoPeace and others was adopted by Jordan but not by the Israelis or Palestinians due to outstanding "final-status" peace process issues, according to the group.

Political tensions have stalled other efforts.

And not everyone welcomes, or trusts, EcoPeace's work.

"We're always accused of being 'normalizers,'" or having normal relations with Israel, said Abu Taleb, the group's Jordanian director. That is a contentious topic, unpopular among many Arabs, due to factors such as Israeli occupations and a lack of a resolution to the Palestinian issue.

Bromberg said he, too, has encountered criticism from a vocal minority in Israel "inappropriately" branding the group's advocacy as benefiting Jordanians and Palestinians at the expense of Israeli interests.

Water woes also complicate revival efforts.

Jordan is one of the world's most water-scarce nations, its challenges compounded by a growing population swelled by waves of refugees. Climate change threatens to exacerbate such problems.

"We are under stress, so we don't have a surplus to add to the Jordan River and to revive it," said Khalil Al-Absi, a Jordanian official with the Jordan Valley Authority. He added: "We have many beautiful ideas for the Jordan River, but there are limitations."

For all the challenges facing the river, Al-Absi said he remains optimistic. The alternative could be grim.

"Water is life," Al-Absi said. "Without water, there is no life."

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SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/spanish-stonehenge-reemerged-amid-europes-sizzling-drought/story?id=88549872
GIST	<p>A Spanish "stonehenge" has reemerged amid the country's devastating drought, officials said.</p> <p>The historic marvel, officially called the Dolmen of Guadalperal, has only been visible four times, according to officials.</p> <p>Experts believe the striking circle of dozens of megalithic stones has existed since 5000 BC. However, it was first discovered by German archaeologist Hugo Obermaier in 1926 before it became flooded in 1963 due to a rural development project under Francisco Franco's dictatorship.</p> <p>Now, the structure sits in a corner of the Valdecanas reservoir located in the country's central province of Caceres.</p> <p>As Spain faces its worst drought in 60 years, officials say the water level in the reservoir has dropped to 28% capacity.</p> <p>"It's a surprise, it's a rare opportunity to be able to access it," archaeologist Enrique Cedillo from Madrid's Complutense University told Reuters.</p> <p>The structure itself has an unknown creator, experts say.</p> <p>Dolmens are vertically arranged stones that usually support a flat boulder or capstone, according to the New World Encyclopedia. How they became erected, however, remains a mystery.</p> <p>Because it is common to find human remains near or in dolmens across Europe, it is believed that the structures served as tombs, New World Encyclopedia said.</p> <p>The dolmen was last visible in 2019, when Europe was facing a drought, NASA said. This 2019 drought was the first time the entire structure became visible since it was flooded in 1963, according to NASA.</p> <p>A petition by Asociación Raíces de Peraleda was posted on Change.org in 2019 to have the structure moved from the reservoir. As of Thursday, it has over 45,000 signatures.</p> <p>"It is a megalithic dolmen of great value that is now, for the first time, and who knows if it will be the last, fully accessible," the petition reads.</p> <p>The petition continues to read that the association launches a "voice of alarm" to officials to move the dolman, in order to "rescue" it and take "advantage of the current circumstances since it is still well preserved."</p> <p>The petition states that the structure is deteriorating, as the rock has become porous and is cracking in some areas. It warns that if the structure is not moved, it may not be strong enough to move in the future.</p> <p>The Iberian peninsula where the dolman lives is at its driest in 1,200 years, with winter rains expected to diminish further, a study published by the Nature Geoscience journal stated.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	08/18 Seattle homicides rose precipitously in 2020
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/seattle-homicides-rose-precipitously-2020-060002425.html

[Seattle, Washington](#), became a focal point of the defund the police movement in 2020, as riots and protests raged in the city that summer after the murder of George Floyd. Following widespread support from liberal leaders and activists to defund, data show homicides rose precipitously in the city.

"It's clear that law enforcement is not always the appropriate avenue to deal with these issues," then-Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan said on July 13, 2020. "Today, the chief and I are announcing an initial \$76 million in reductions to the 2021 budget."

Her announcement came as the city's council members pushed for the police department to be cut by a whopping 50% - a proposal Durkan slammed. The police budget for 2021 was ultimately set to \$363 million, compared to 2020's \$401.8 million budget.

As Durkan announced the partial defunding in July, protests and riots continued raging in her city, causing damage to buildings, cars seen lit on fire, the city enforcing curfews, and police making dozens of arrests. The ire of protesters was also directed at Durkan, who demanded she resign over the police department's handling of the protests, arguing the city violated the constitutional rights of demonstrators with heavy-handed tactics.

The protesters calling for Durkan's resignation even briefly occupied Seattle's City Hall in June, before heading to an autonomous zone in the city's Capitol Hill neighborhood. The area, known as "CHOP" or "CHAZ," became a national focal point of that summer, as fatal shootings unfolded, including the killing of a 16-year-old boy.

But as rioters occupied the city's east police precinct, Durkan declared that Seattle was seeing a "summer of love." The mayor soon walked that comment back as violent crimes in the area mounted.

As 2020 drew to a close, Seattle data showed a precipitous rise in homicides.

In 2019, Seattle recorded 31 homicides. That number skyrocketed by 61% the following year to 50 homicides, the highest number recorded in 26 years.

Seattle's data on homicides follows a national trend from 2020. FBI data show murders increased by nearly 30% in 2020, marking the largest single-year increase in killings since the agency began tracking the crimes.

Experts who have spoken to Fox News Digital pointed to the defund movement, the pandemic and its lockdowns upsetting daily life in unprecedented ways, and the Ferguson effect for the rise in crimes in 2020.

"Certainly, the protests and riots mid-2020 after the death of George Floyd followed a pattern of spiking violence that we've seen following past viral police incidents, such as the deaths of Michael Brown and Freddie Gray. This pattern has been termed the 'Ferguson Effect': police pull back while violent crime spikes precipitously," Hannah Meyers, director of the policing and public safety initiative at the Manhattan Institute, told Fox News Digital earlier this year of the national murder increases in 2020.

Homicides ticked down to 42 in 2021, and the city has logged at least 27 homicides this year, according to Seattle Police data.

Shootings have meanwhile skyrocketed this year. Seattle Police data analyzed by Fox News Digital shows there have been 446 reported shootings this year, as of July 31. The shootings marked a 42% increase compared to last year during the same time period, when 315 shootings were reported.

As crime has increased, the police department in Seattle has faced steep staffing shortages - a problem that has affected nearly all law enforcement agencies in King County, where Seattle is located.

"Pretty clearly, the defund, disarm and disparage movement by Seattle's liberal political leaders has utterly gutted our criminal justice infrastructure. And we are seeing the results of those failed policies out on the streets in the form of a 50-year-high crime," King County Councilman Reagan Dunn told Fox News Digital.

Seattle PD has lost more than 400 members over the last two and half years, including the city's police chief in August of 2020 who said she felt "destined to fail" after police cuts and amid continued talks to defund the department even more.

The King County Sheriff's Office had more than 100 vacant deputy positions as of last month. And at the King County jail, the largest adult detention center in the county and located in the city, staffing shortages played out on a national stage in July when it shut down booking services for eight hours overnight due to staffing shortages.

The staffing issues have even extended to the Seattle Fire Department, which has been understaffed 69% of the time this year alone and spending more than \$11 million to fund overtime costs to cover the gaps, KTTH radio host Jason Rantz reported in July.

In 2021, Durkan pulled out of the mayoral race after she had already filed her re-election paperwork in 2020, before the pandemic and calls to defund the police rocked the nation. She had met calls for her resignation not only from protesters and rioters, but also by Democratic groups in the city and a councilmember who accused her of "abuse of power," arguing protesters were faced with brutality from officers.

"This was a hard year ... and it was a hard year on every level, including the civil rights uprisings, and the racial reckoning and how we do policing. And I think all us have learned a number of lessons from this year," Durkan said when announcing she would not run.

In November of last year, voters issued a resounding defeat to liberal, pro-defund the police candidates. Candidates for mayor, city council and city attorney, who supported defunding the Seattle Police Department were defeated by more centrist candidates.

Former City Council president Bruce Harrell defeated a mayoral opponent who sought to further gut the police department, and became the city's mayor.

He has since called for the hiring of 500 police officers for the city over the next five years, with the hopes the department will employ 1,450 trained officers by 2027.

Harrell's office did not immediately respond to request for comment on initiatives to boost the police force or the 2020 defund movement. Fox News Digital attempted to reach Durkan as well as a former staffer for comment, but did not immediately receive a reply.

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HEADLINE	08/19 Auction win: luggage, kids' bodies inside
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/08/19/new-zealand-suitcases-children-remains/
GIST	<p>On a Thursday afternoon this month, a family returned to their home in New Zealand with a trailer-load of stuff they had scored at an auction. But as they were unpacking the items in a southern Auckland suburb, they noticed a putrid odor.</p> <p>Inside two suitcases they had bought online in the auction for abandoned goods, the family found human remains.</p> <p>The Aug. 11 discovery quickly prompted an investigation. A week later, Detective Inspector Tofilau Faamanuia Vaelua of the New Zealand Police announced that the remains belonged to two children. They are believed to have been between the ages of 5 and 10, according to a post-mortem examination.</p>

“These children may have been deceased for a number of years before being found last week. We also believe the suitcases have been in storage for a number of years,” Vaaelua said at a [news conference](#) Thursday.

The discovery has stumped authorities and the public. Myriad questions remain — chiefly, who are the children, and how did their bodies end up in a suburban storage unit?

Foul play is suspected, Vaaelua said.

“We are determined to hold the person, or persons, responsible for the deaths of these children to account,” he said, adding that members of the family who made the discovery are not suspects.

Police are still working to identify the children and hope to notify their relatives, who may not be aware of their deaths, Vaaelua said. The suitcases, he said, had been left in the storage center for three or four years before being purchased by the unsuspecting family.

The family got hold of the bags through a [“Storage Wars”](#)-type auction. Participants in the events buy the contents of a storage locker without knowing what’s inside. In this case, the family received a slew of items from a unit at Safe Store’s facility in Papatoetoe.

Safe Store didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment from The Washington Post. However, the company’s director told local outlet [Stuff](#) that the business is cooperating with police.

At Thursday’s news conference, Vaaelua said he couldn’t confirm whether police had spoken with the storage unit’s previous owner. He said New Zealand’s national police department is working with overseas agencies and Interpol, an international network of police forces in 195 countries.

“This is no easy investigation,” Vaaelua added. “And no matter how long or how many years you investigate horrific cases like this, it’s never an easy task.”

Residents on New Zealand’s northernmost island — known in English as North Island and in Maori as Te Ika-a-Maui — were shocked by the grim discovery. Neighbors in Clendon Park, an area with about 9,000 residents, told the [New Zealand Herald](#) they saw the family that bought the suitcases unloading strollers, baby walkers and toys.

Soon after, a “wicked smell” began to emanate from their home, another neighbor told Stuff. The man told the outlet he used to work at a crematorium and knew how bodies smelled.

“I knew straight away [what it was] and I thought, ‘Where is that coming from?’ ” he said.

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HEADLINE	08/18 CBP seizes ‘rainbow fentanyl’ at border
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/thousands-rainbow-fentanyl-pills-seized-authorities-warn-possible-new-trend-targeting-kids
GIST	<p>Customs and Border Protection agents in Arizona seized more than 15,000 fentanyl pills that were strapped to a person's legs on Wednesday, and one official says that it could be the start of a trend targeting younger people.</p> <p>The "candy"-looking pills were seized in Arizona at the Nogales Port of Entry on Wednesday, and Port Director Michael W. Humphries said that it marked the second consecutive day that such pills were found.</p> <p>"This could be the start of a trend with transnational criminal organizations targeting younger users," Humphries said.</p>

	<p>On Tuesday, Border Patrol agents at the same port of entry seized a vehicle that contained more than 250,000 fentanyl pills, which were colored like candy, as well as 11 pounds of heroin and 10 pounds of methamphetamine.</p> <p>"Officers made sure these dangerous narcotics won't make it to U.S. cities," Humphries said.</p> <p>Customs and Border Protection agents at the Nogales Port of Entry seized more than 70,000 fentanyl pills on Aug. 9, and said in a separate Twitter post that more than 1.1 million fentanyl pills were seized from July 31 through Aug. 7.</p> <p>The seizures come just days after officials in Oregon seized "rainbow fentanyl" in Portland.</p> <p>"The public needs to be aware of the rising use of powdered fentanyl. We believe this is going to be the new trend seen on the streets of Portland," Special Investigation Unit Sgt. Matt Ferguson said at the time.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Marysville PD offers path out drug addiction
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/with-majority-of-cases-linked-to-drug-addiction-marysville-police-department-offers-path-to-recovery
GIST	<p>When it comes to property crimes, Marysville police say the majority of their cases are linked to drug addiction.</p> <p>"Drugs and crime go hand in hand. Our department is working on the accountability piece as well as the compassion piece. We are working to get people the treatment they need," said Detective Sergeant Wallace Forslof of MPD's Property Crimes Unit.</p> <p>Officers have partnered with an embedded social worker to try to get people the addiction and mental health treatment they need.</p> <p>The mission of the Law Enforcement Embedded Social Worker (LEESW) program is to help clients navigate the complex social service system and to remove the barriers that exist between addiction, homelessness and mental health issues to sobriety and housing.</p> <p>The program has had promising success. Since 2018, the team has contacted 2,868 people. 472 of those accepted help and many now have jobs and housing.</p> <p>Officer Mike Buell and Rochelle long, a mental health counselor have spent the last five years working together to change lives.</p> <p>They call the people they contact their clients. They will meet them anywhere, on the street, in a camp or even in jail if someone is ready to get clean.</p> <p>It's about showing empathy and compassion.</p> <p>"Personally, I have a daughter who is a heroin addict, so it hit close to home for me," said Officer Buell.</p> <p>Heroin is rare to see nowadays. Now, it's all meth and fentanyl laced pills called blues ripping lives apart.</p> <p>The newest ones are mixed with Valium and Xanax making them even more deadly.</p> <p>Not even Narcan will work to bring them back in some cases.</p> <p>Rochelle says the biggest hurdle for their clients to accept help is their fear of getting sick.</p> <p>Many of their clients are dealing with mental health issues as well as drugs.</p>

	<p>"All of our clientele have a story and I want to hear their story. They're human beings, and they should be treated as such, and I have a lot of compassion for them," said Long.</p> <p>It's all about building trust with them because every time they succeed in getting someone off the street, they give that person a future as a healthy and productive member of the community.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Tacoma police plan to cut crime effective?
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/tacoma-police-plan-to-cut-crime-underway-but-some-say-they-arent-seeing-a-difference
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — The Tacoma Police Department has begun implementing a plan to curb crime in the city amid two recent high profile shootings that left three people wounded during separate holdup attempts this week.</p> <p>Sarah Hagan's brother and sister live a few houses down from where a shooting happened on South 8th and M streets this week.</p> <p>"It's always awful," Hagan said Thursday. "I mean, talking about this specific shooting. It happens all the time."</p> <p>Tacoma police said a group filming a music video was targeted by another group who showed up and tried to rob them.</p> <p>During the incident, police said multiple shots were fired, wounding two teenagers and a 2-year-old girl.</p> <p>The three unidentified victims were all taken to a local hospital for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries, according to investigators. Information about their conditions was not immediately available.</p> <p>Amid two recent high profile shootings, some Tacoma residents say they haven't seen the results of the plan so far.</p> <p>A Wells Fargo bank customer was shot Wednesday at a drive-thru ATM as he was attempting to withdraw money, according to police.</p> <p>Investigators said the suspect, who remained at large Thursday, stole the victim's wallet and then shot the bank customer as he began to reverse his car in the direction of the fleeing suspect.</p> <p>It all happened on S. 54th Street and Pacific Avenue.</p> <p>James Hill said his mother lives near where the robbery occurred.</p> <p>"Well it kind of scares me," he said.</p> <p>Tacoma Police Chief Avery Moore unveiled his plan last month to deter crime in the city and the department is currently in the first phase of implementation, which started July 5 and focuses on crime hot spots.</p> <p>"They go to these locations for 15 minutes at a time and sit with their lights on," said Wendy Haddow, spokesperson for the Tacoma Police Department. "This is to deter criminal behavior. Officers are also going to turn out in high crime areas."</p> <p>The police department said it is not yet releasing data from the effectiveness of the current phase.</p> <p>Hagan says she's not seeing changes when it comes to curbing crime.</p>

	<p>"I don't think there has been much of a difference," she said. "I love the effort and the idea, but I think a lot more needs to be done."</p> <p>Hill has taken a wait-and-see approach.</p> <p>"We'll see," he said. "When some time has passed, to me, I feel there's more shootings, and quite frankly. I'm nervous."</p> <p>Tacoma police administrators are set to release the data and results from the plan in October.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/18 Police warn of armed robberies at ATMs
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/armed-robberies-atms-king-pierce-counties/281-435c789c-e7fe-43c6-98a2-43d87c7b1a52
GIST	<p>FIFE, Wash. — Police are telling people to be vigilant after several armed robberies at ATMs in King and Pierce counties.</p> <p>The latest occurred at a drive-up ATM in Fife on Aug. 7, according to Renton police. The same suspects in that crime may be connected to crimes in Parkland, Bonney Lake, Puyallup, Federal Way, Kent and possibly Seattle.</p> <p>Renton police issued the warning because it is surrounded by the cities where the crimes occurred.</p> <p>During the robbery in Fife, the victim pulled up to an ATM. The suspects waited until the victim put their card in the machine and entered their pin. The suspects ran up to the victim with guns drawn, taking over the transaction while pointing a pistol at the victim.</p> <p>The suspects stole several hundred dollars from the victim's account, as well as items from her vehicle. They fled in a car driven by a third suspect, according to Renton police.</p> <p>Renton released the following tips when banking at an ATM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal safety planning should include stops at your financial institution (or an ATM) during daylight hours. • Keep an eye out for any suspicious subjects loitering near the ATM or nearby. If you're feeling uncomfortable, listen to your intuition and leave. • At a drive-up ATM, keep doors locked and all windows closed, except the one you are using. Keep the vehicle running and be watchful of the vehicle's front, rear, and sides. If someone approaches your vehicle on foot, cancel the transaction and leave immediately. • Try not to focus solely on the ATM machine during your transaction; keep your head on a swivel and make sure to keep aware of your surroundings and who may be approaching. • Conduct ATM transactions at machines that are inside a grocery store or other business.
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HEADLINE	08/18 WSP: 170 King Co. HOV violators in 2 ½ hrs
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/wa-state-patrol-cites-170-king-county-hov-violators-within-2-5-hours/
GIST	<p>Washington State Patrol troopers cited 170 high-occupancy vehicle lane violators during a 2 1/2 hour emphasis patrol on Wednesday, according to Trooper Rick Johnson.</p> <p>HOV violations are the most reported complaint among drivers in King County, he said.</p> <p>"It's been a common complaint since HOV lanes were born and we enforce it daily," he said. "But I wanted to let people know 'we hear you.'"</p>

Over the years, the Patrol has seen a range of HOV violators, from those who flagrantly flout the occupancy lane laws to those who do so sneakily, propping dummies, mannequins, cardboard cutouts and even backpacks topped with hats in passenger seats.

For a first HOV violation, the fine is \$186, and all subsequent violations within a two-year period increase to \$336, according to Washington State Department of Transportation. If a doll or dummy is in the car, an additional \$200 will be added to the fine.

The problem is not limited to King County, according to Trooper Robert Reyer, who is the Patrol spokesperson for Pierce and Thurston counties.

He said he's been seeing a lot more aggressive driving, including tailgating, cutting people off and hopping solo into the HOV lane, compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic. At times, it's escalated to road rage, Reyer said.

"It's very hard to pinpoint why people seem to have changed that much, but it's definitely noticeable," he said. "People are not as patient as they seemed before. It's almost like they've forgotten how to apply courtesy and manners."

Reyer said he discussed this phenomenon of post-COVID driving aggression with a psychologist, who said he wasn't surprised.

There have been a number of studies, the psychologist explained to Reyer, showing that even very peaceful animals can turn aggressive when confined to a small space. Ordinarily tranquil animals may attack others unprovoked, including their own offspring.

The combination of isolation and confinement experienced during the lockdowns was not good for us, he said.

And because you never know the issues facing the driver next to you and because you can't control the behavior of others, it's always much safer and wiser to pause before reacting, Reyer said.

"It could be upsetting when someone cuts me off and I might feel the need to honk my horn, or use a gesture or a facial expression to express my dissatisfaction," he said. "But for sure the best thing is to take a very deep breath, count to 10 and not respond."

The worst thing to do is mirror the aggression.

"You don't know what the other person is capable of," he said. "Just get in your car. Go from point A to point B, be patient and stay safe."

The State Patrol has not announced any upcoming HOV emphasis patrols in King County, Johnson said, but that doesn't mean there won't be one.

"We don't always let the public know in advance," he said.

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